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THE DENVER MAGAZINE

20 Perfect Sips

Denver's Trendiest Drinks Are High On Flavor—And Low On Alcohol

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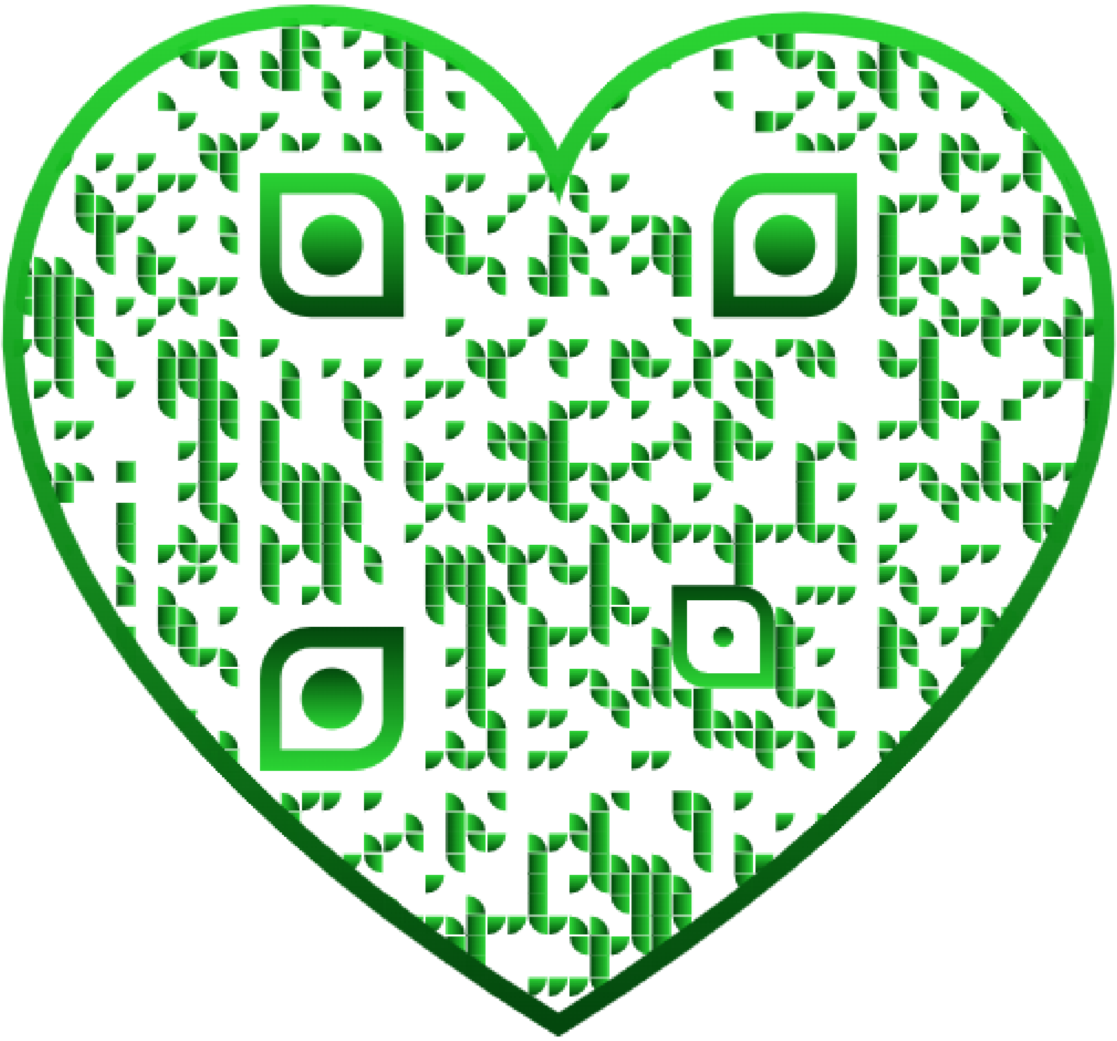

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EDITED BY JESSICA LARUSSO

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The Things We Leave Behind

What a photographer learned about her great-grandmother's vibrant life on a rural Colorado ranch by documenting her most prized possessions—and what the experience taught the artist about herself.

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Clockwise from top left: Sarah Banks (2); Laurent Salino/Agence Zoom/Getty Images; Courtesy of Ngala Trading

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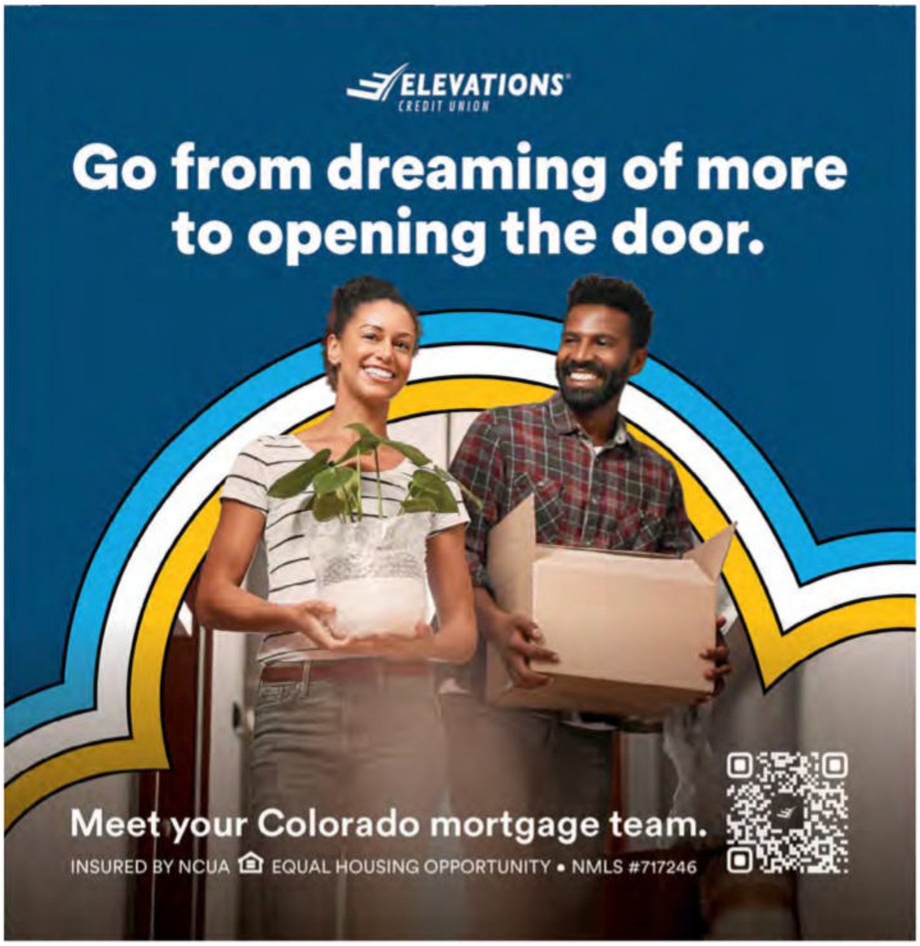
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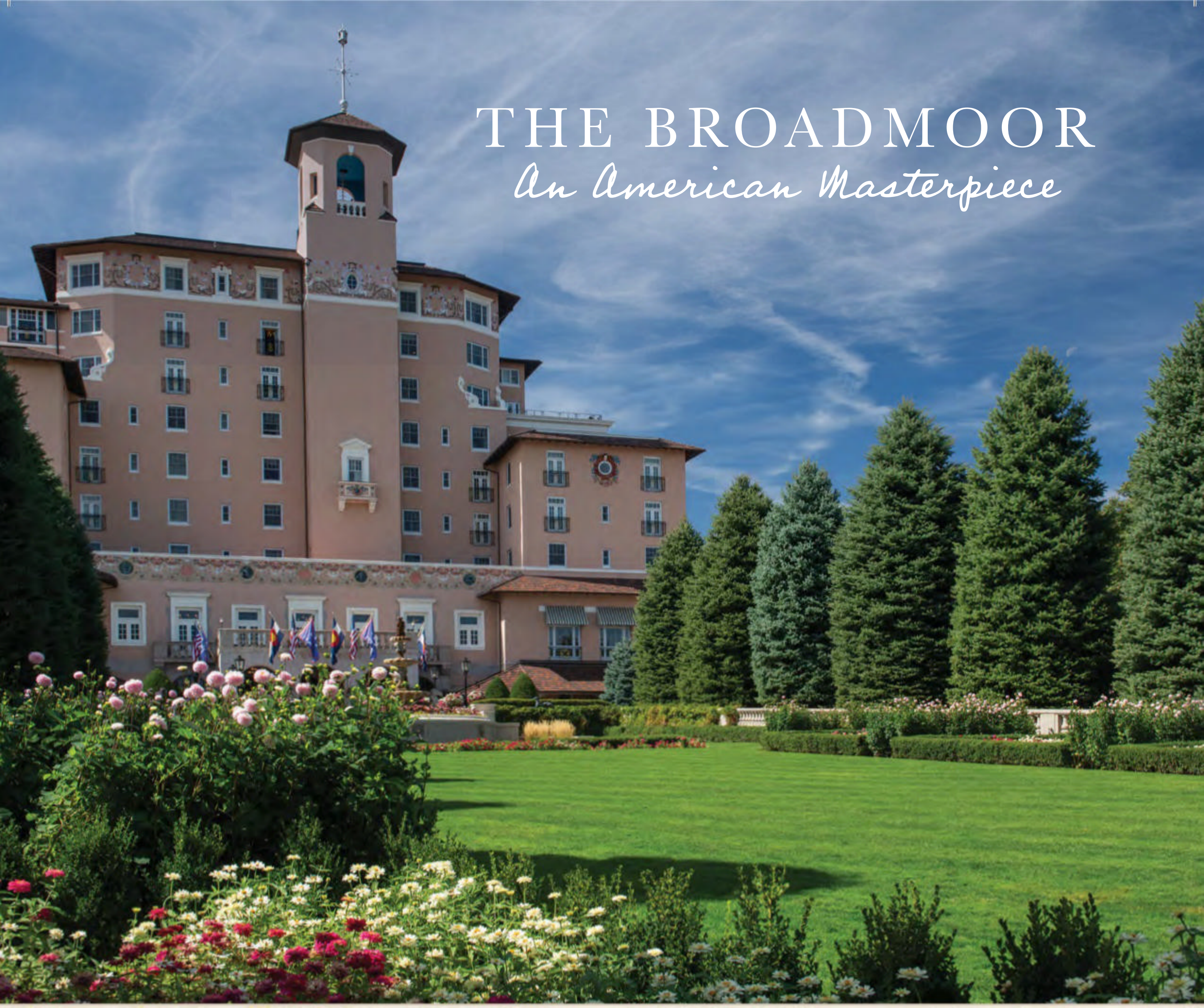

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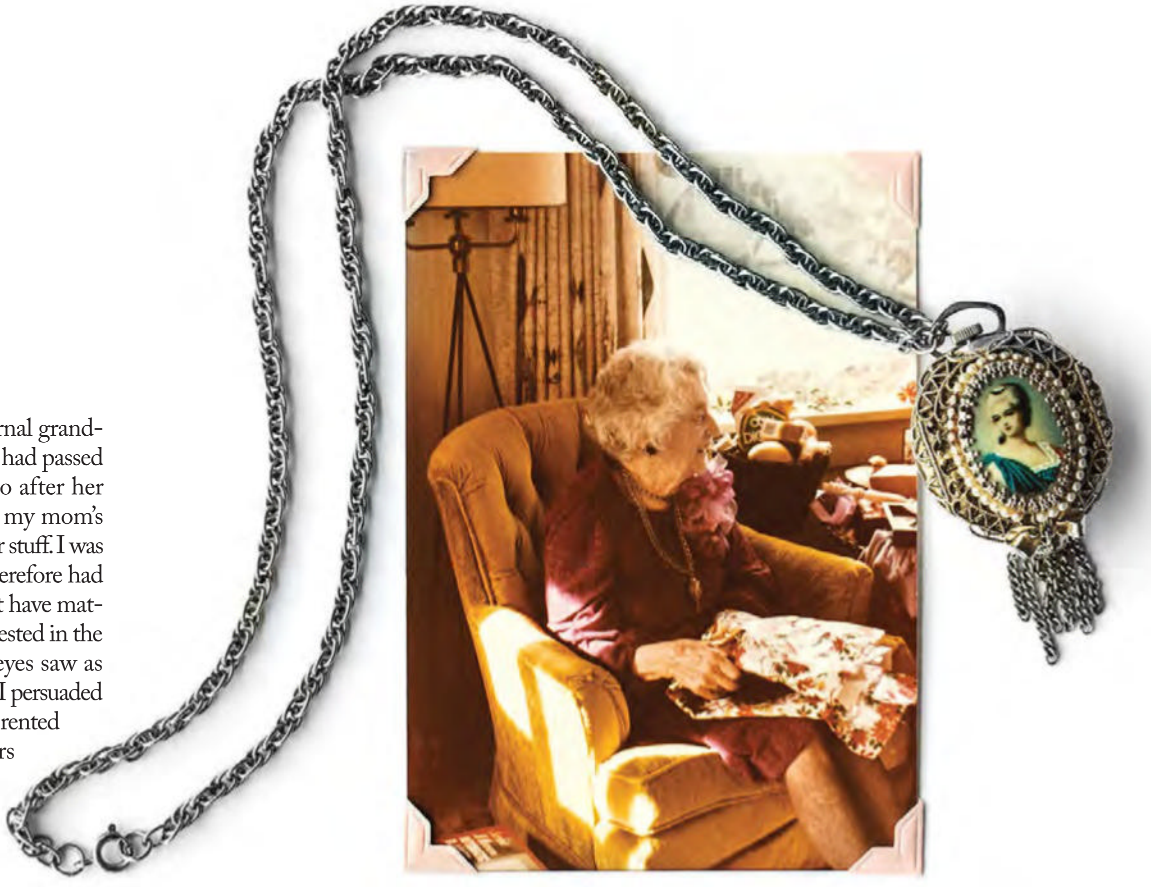
In Memory



^ Photographer Kaylinn Gilstrap's great-grandmother Zita at her Colorado ranch home, wearing the pictured necklace

I was nine when my maternal grandmother died. Her husband had passed a couple of years earlier, so after her funeral, we gathered with my mom's two siblings to divvy up their stuff. I was the youngest cousin and therefore had the last pick, but it wouldn't have mattered. No one else was interested in the things my preadolescent eyes saw as treasures. Among the items I persuaded my parents to load into our rented minivan and haul 10 hours back to Indiana from Pennsylvania: Grammy's costume jewelry, her souvenir spoon collection, and a taxidermy mountain goat head.

I still can't believe my mom and dad let me take Snowy. I later learned that Grampop had shot the shaggy white bovine on a hunting trip to British Columbia, but all I knew at the time was that petting Snowy was the first thing I did every time we visited. My parents must have been swept up in the emotion of the moment, but the sentiment didn't last. After a few years of Snowy taking up valuable storage space, I had to beg my other grandma to take him in. When I finally bought my own home in Colorado in 2017, Snowy made the trip in a U-Haul, wedged between hand-me-down furniture.

Those memories surfaced as I worked with photographer Kaylinn Gilstrap on "The Things We Leave Behind" (page 46). In 2019, Gilstrap began documenting her great-grandmother Zita's possessions at the family's southeastern Colorado ranch. The resulting collection of images—of Zita's world-travel mementos, high-fashion accessories, and the rural landscape today—are paired with historical snapshots and tales about Zita to create a vibrant portrait of a woman who refused to be defined by her small-town environs.

The project is an intimate personal history of Gilstrap's family. But it also made me think about the inheritance that nine-year-old me fought so hard to keep. One of Grammy's blue faux stone brooches became a hair comb I wore on my wedding day. My family regularly uses her tiny spoons emblazoned with travel destinations to scoop cheese and jam at our dinner table; we laugh thinking about my teetotaler grandparents walking the Las Vegas Strip and wonder if they saw the same sites we did on a recent trip to Puerto Rico. And Snowy? He now presides over our basement rec room, giving me a reason to tell mildly alarmed visitors about Grampop—and continuing to keep his memory alive.

JESSICA LaRUSSO
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Kaylinn Gilstrap (2)

KAYLINN GILSTRAP
Photographer

Fourth-generation Coloradan Kaylinn Gilstrap may have left the ranch she grew up on for Atlanta, but the remote landscape in the southeastern corner of the state regularly beckons the professional photographer back. "My muse is a sturdy woman who demands attention," Gilstrap says, "which is a good lead-in to my great-grandmother Zita"—the subject of "The Things We Leave Behind," Gilstrap's photo essay that begins on page 46. The project started with the discovery of around 50 of Zita's hats, surprisingly modish pieces for a 20th-century rural homemaker that Gilstrap found marvelous and intriguing. **"For me, what makes things super valuable is the stories we attach to them,"** Gilstrap says. Naturally, she decided to memorialize Zita by photographing the hats and other trinkets and gathering family recollections to flesh out her portrait. But you don't have to be an artist to repurpose mementos in ways that allow you to hold onto the memories they represent. "Before they clean out someone's house," Gilstrap says, "I encourage folks to think: *What can you do, creatively, to preserve Grandma's knickknack shelf?*"

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Back To Basics

The Velveteers, a Boulder rock trio featuring vocalist/guitarist Demi Demitro *(middle)* and dual drummers Baby Pottersmith *(left)* and Jonny Fig *(right)*, spent six years scheduling their own gigs and producing their own music before releasing their first label-backed album, *Nightmare Daydream*, in 2021. But the following two whirlwind years on the road, opening for big-name acts including Guns N' Roses, proved that entering the music-industry machine can grind at a band's soul. "We do this because we love making art," Demitro says. "And a lot of times, when you're successful at something, it pulls you away from the reason you started doing it in the first place." So for their follow-up, *A Million Knives*, which debuts on Valentine's Day, the Velveteers attempted to channel their early, independent streak. "I wanted to get back to the basics of when I first started writing music," Demitro says. "I tried to zone out any voices in my head, of what certain people wanted from us." Produced by Black Keys frontman Dan Auerbach's label, Easy Eye Sound, *A Million Knives* still rocks with powerful guitar riffs and booming drum crashes but is more refined than its predecessor. The band's goal? "Let's make something that we love, and let's not care what anyone else thinks," Demitro says. "Because at the end of the day, that's all that really matters." —**SPENCER CAMPBELL**

Courtesy of Jason Thomas Geering

Meet Your Match

Unlucky in love? Your dating profile may be to blame.

When the pandemic slowed Heather Henning's wedding photography business, she found her pivot in an unexpected place: Denver's singles scene. "I had essentially dated all of Colorado," she says. "I got really good at crafting my [online dating] profile and helping my friends with theirs. I even went on dates where they'd pull out their phones, show me their profile, and listen to my advice." Combining that field experience with her passion for photography, in 2020 Henning launched Denver Online Dating, which helps local singles find their better halves by analyzing and refreshing their personals with new photos, catchy copy, and even wardrobe styling sessions (packages start at $480). Here, Henning shares her tips for attracting the right swipes that are right for you. –**MICHELLE SHORTALL**

Dig Deep

Sure, you like to hike, camp, and snowboard, but so does every other single person in Denver. "There's so much more to you than just that," Henning says. "What's something you do regularly for your close friends? Are you passionate about the environment? Are you proud of something you've accomplished?" Sprinkle in your vulnerable side—say, your love of gratitude journaling or self-help books—without getting overly emotional. No one wants to hear about your high school heartbreak.

Say Cheese

"The person on the other end wants to know that you are a happy person, you're comfortable in your skin, and you're fun to be around—and a full, genuine smile is going to go a long way with that," Henning says. That's why she always tells her clients to make the first photo on their profiles a solo, full-smile portrait. She also recommends avoiding shots with sunglasses, balaclavas, or anything else that might distract from your lovely mug.

Show And Tell

Even if your prose would make Cyrano de Bergerac swoon, not knowing the difference between they're, their, and there could be a real turn-off. "Improper grammar and punctuation and lazy answers to prompts are unattractive," Henning says. Spice up your bio by showing—not just telling—the other person what it's like to spend time with you. "Don't just write that you like to ski. Say something like, 'We're the same type of weird if we both like to listen to murder podcasts on the way to the ski hill.'"

Parental Guidance

It's great—and sexy!—that you're a proud parent, but displaying your littles on the apps is off-limits. "Many people immediately swipe left because they feel it's unkind to post children online, for the child's safety," Henning says. Mention your parental status in your profile's written area instead. As for four-legged children: "If you don't have a photo with that pet toward the front of your profile, you're doing it wrong," Henning says. "People want to see that you know how to take care of a living thing long-term."

Keep Calm And Date On

Bad dates happen. Even worse: Good dates disappear. Try not to get discouraged. The key to getting lucky in love, Henning says, is continuing to go on dates rather than deleting your profile every time you have a less-than-ideal experience. And as harsh as it can feel at times, ghosting is part of the online dating game. "Take it as a blessing that they're not wasting your time anymore," Henning says.

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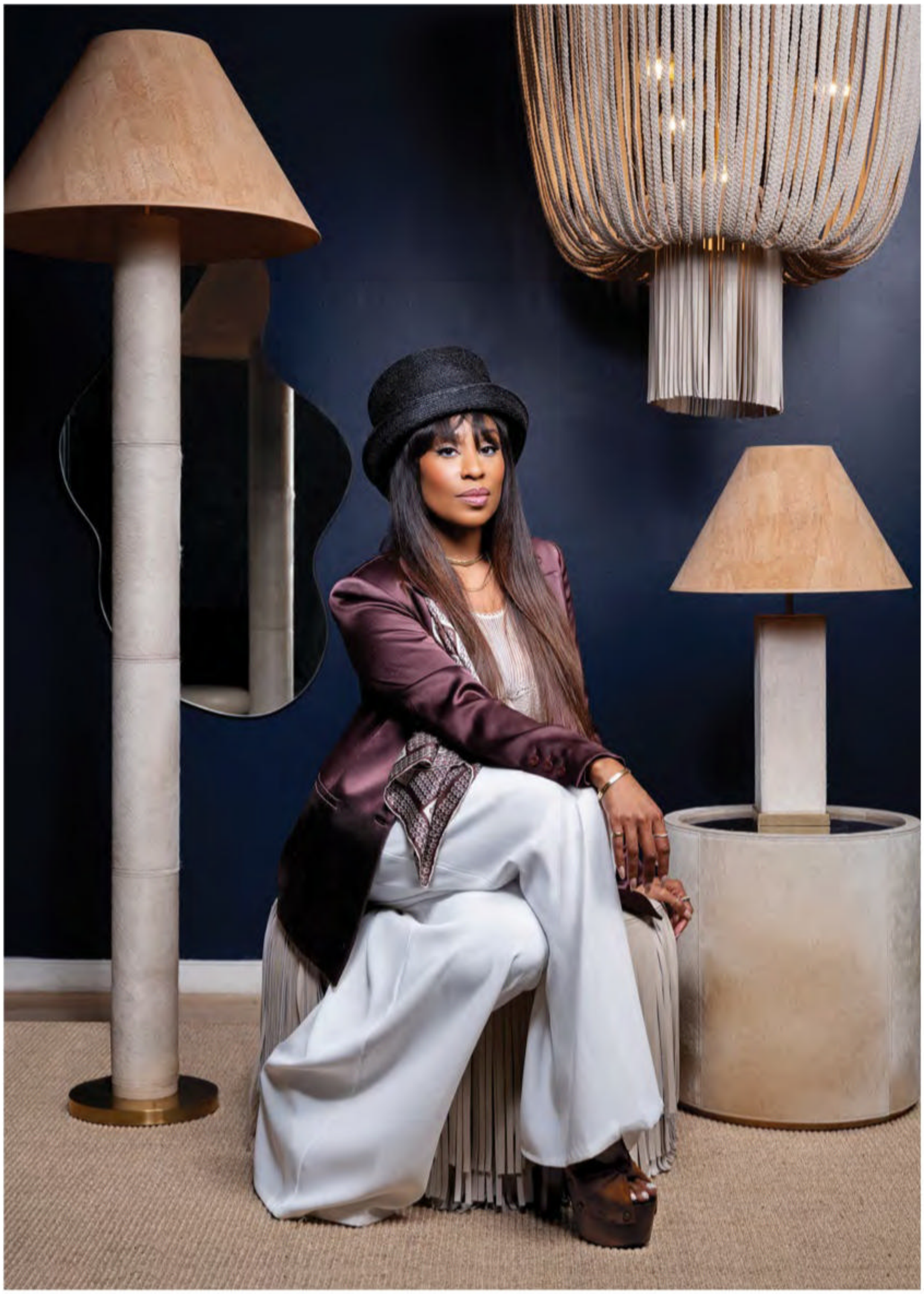
From Africa With Love

Denver designer NeKeia McSwain's glamorous line of contemporary home furnishings celebrates her passion for African culture and craft.



NeKeia McSwain poses with several pieces from her collection.

Courtesy of Ngala Trading

In 2022, NeKeia McSwain visited the Johannesburg manufacturing facility of Ngala Trading. The Denver-based interior designer was working with the South African decor-maker on a new line of furnishings, and during her tour, she asked one of Ngala's artisans, "Can you braid?" "She looked at me like I was crazy," McSwain recalls. "Then she showed me eight or nine braid options and asked, 'Which one do you want?'"

Getting to know the talented craftspeople at Ngala was a career highlight for McSwain. She first teamed up with the company in 2021, when they collaborated on a capsule collection of lighting designs featuring cascading tiers of hand-cut leather in the rich colors of the savanna. This past fall, McSwain and Ngala reunited for the second NeKeia Collection. "My culture means everything to me, and it is a profound honor to be a young Black designer in such a vibrant space," McSwain says of the reputation she's made for herself and her firm, NeKeia & Co., in Denver's design market. "When I got to create a luxury line that's made in Johannesburg, it wasn't just about aesthetics anymore. It became about celebrating my rich heritage."

Inspired by her familial roots in West Africa, observations made in the South African bush during her 2022 trip, and a palette of natural materials, the new collection encompasses seating, accent tables, accessories, and lighting embellished with braided leathers, polished metals, and soft hides. On the Nobu ottoman ($3,250), a gleaming brass belt cinches a skirt of butter-soft leather fringe. The thick edge of the curvilinear Nkova mirror ($985) is wrapped unexpectedly in black tanned leather. And the Nalani chandelier ($6,855) reflects what McSwain describes as the "strength and beauty of Black womanhood" through leather details that are braided like hair.

McSwain believes that these aesthetic qualities are conduits for deeper meanings. "My hope is that the craftsmanship sparks conversations about heritage and artistry," she says. "I've always been huge on celebrating culture, but now I'm more unapologetic about it. I have been empowered to redefine luxury on my own terms."

—CHRISTINE DEORIO

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A League Of Their Own

Shaun White's new competition series hopes to make the snowboarding circuit less of a grind.

When superstar snowboarder Shaun White announced his retirement in 2022, he had amassed three Olympic golds, 23 X Games medals, and a fortune unheard of for most action sports athletes. His latest follow-up trick: providing up-and-coming riders with a launchpad to similar success.

Debuting at Aspen's Buttermilk Mountain next month, the Snow League is a four-event, yearlong series that will travel to different resorts around the world. The inaugural season runs through the winter of 2026 and boasts a combined prize purse of $1.5 million—half a million more than the X Games and an all-time high for snowsports. And with the heightened visibility of live, ticketed events that will air on Peacock and NBC, the league aims to bring major sponsorship opportunities to athletes, many of whom struggle to make a living solely on competition earnings.

"It's a game changer," says Telluride-based Olympic snowboarder Lucas Foster, who is among the 36 riders invited to compete in the Snow League's first year. "The pathway to being a pro contest rider is very, very limited. There's not much room to do anything but try to go to the Olympics. Now we finally have an actual series with structure and big prize money, like the World Surf League. It'll be a lot easier for fans to follow and for companies to buy into."

Since 1994, elite halfpipe snowboarders have had just one (low-paying) seasonlong series to participate in: the Snowboard World Cup, operated by the International Ski and Snowboard Federation. Though there are plenty of competitions sprinkled throughout the year, such as the X Games, they are one-off events that lack the stature and fan base of organized associations like the NFL or NBA. "I think a lot of us contest riders feel pretty stagnant doing the same schedule every year," Foster says, noting that the Snow League's novel head-to-head format will provide a platform for riders to get creative in their craft.

Here's how it works: At each Snow League event, 36 riders (the top 20 men and 16 women in the world) will compete in qualifying heats, followed by men's and women's head-to-head matchups to determine the victors. Riders will accrue points based on their performance at each stop; at the end of the series, the league will crown overall male and female champions. "I think the level [of tricks] will move away from more flips and spins to increasing overall longevity throughout the weekend of the contest," Foster says. "We're going to be taking hundreds of runs. You won't be able to just do the same things again and again. It'll be a whole new experience that we're all craving."

For White, the Snow League is an opportunity to bring the prestige of, say, winning the Super Bowl or the World Series to his sport—and to motivate the next generation of talent. The next Shaun Whites are already out there, he says: "We're giving them a space to be discovered, and we're hoping to inspire many more."

—JEN MURPHY

Pro snowboarder and Telluride local Lucas Foster is one of 36 riders participating in the first season of the Snow League.

IF YOU GO

When: March 7–8 **How To Watch:** Tickets are available at thesnowleague.com. Admission is free on Qualifying Day (March 7) if booked online in advance; Finals Day (March 8) starts at $25 for Colorado residents, $50 for general admission. All events will air live on Peacock, with encores on NBC Sports.

From left: Cindy Ord/Getty Images for Fanatics; Sean M. Haffey/Getty Images

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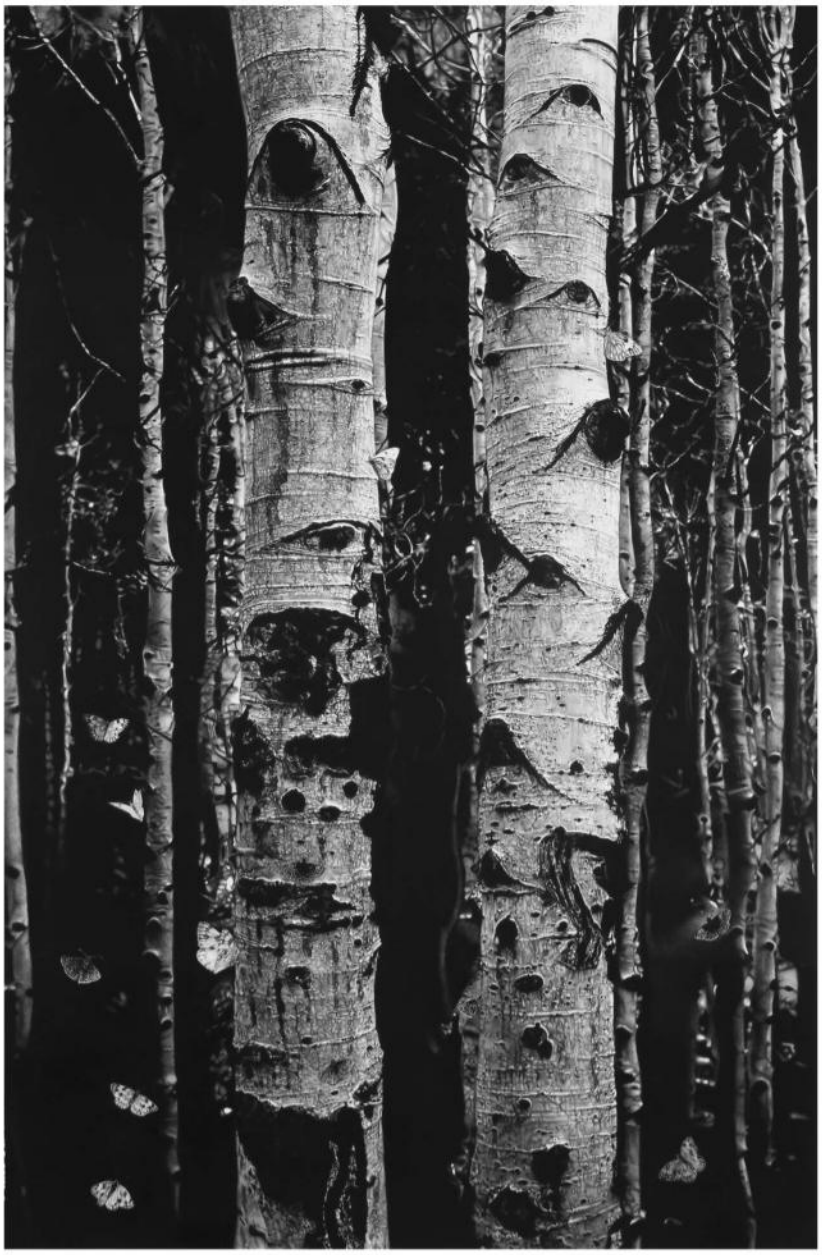

Kaye's "Dusky and Checkered Wings" features fire-adaptive aspens, one of her favorite trees to draw.

From The Ashes

Denver artist Anna Kaye's lifelike charcoal works explore the devastating beauty of Colorado wildfires.

Growing up in Detroit in the 1980s and '90s, Anna Kaye saw a lot of abandoned homes, blighted buildings, and neglected city parks—scenes of urban decay that prompted the visual artist to search for greener pastures in her mid-20s. But after she landed in Colorado, Kaye found herself enthralled by a different kind of destruction: the Centennial State's cycles of rampant wildfires. Like a moth to a flame, Kaye has dedicated a large part of her artistic career (which has included watercolor paintings and colored pencil drawings) to depicting forest fires in hyperrealistic charcoal works, and 20 of them will be on display during a solo exhibit at the Denver Botanic Gardens from February 15 to May 20. Ahead of the opening of *Finding Light*, we spoke with Kaye about why fire sets her creativity ablaze. –BARBARA O'NEIL

***5280*: Why are you inspired by wildfires?**
Anna Kaye: In life, we experience a lot of dualities—negatives and positives. It's the same with fire. It brings us devastation, but, as species regenerate, it also brings us so much hope. I'm fascinated by how wildfires can be destructive, but they're also necessary. Some plant species even *need* fire in order to germinate; it's been a part of our forests for millions of years.

Where do you go to gather inspiration?
I'm mesmerized by burn sites, specifically the site of the 2002 Hayman Fire near Colorado Springs. I continue to visit that area to observe how the forest is coming back and how the various species are growing in it. Every year I see more little baby pine trees scattered around, and it's heartwarming. I take pictures of the regrowth and use them as references for my work.

You often incorporate science into your art. How?
I studied geology and fine art at Skidmore College in New York. I moved to Colorado for nature, and at the core of my love of nature is science. When I work on my drawings, I research the species or landscapes that I'm depicting and how they're part of a larger web of ecosystems to make sure I portray them and their interactions with one another accurately.

What's something viewers should look for at the exhibit?
One wall focuses specifically on birds perched on tree stumps [amid charred landscapes]. Whenever I incorporate a bird, it represents hope in a regenerating forest. As a fire sweeps across a landscape, it transforms the forest, opening up the skies and providing new perch sites for birds to forage for food.

Why do you use charcoal for your drawings?
Emphasizing the material of burnt wood allows me to further explore the concept of a regenerating forest. For some of my pieces, I collect resin from native trees—which doesn't hurt the trees, it's just the sap that seeps out and crystallizes. I ignite the resin until it smokes and then draw what I see. Since ancient times, people have burned organic materials like tree resin to cultivate a calm state of mind and commemorate a new beginning. The smoke in my art symbolizes renewal.

From top: Courtesy of Anna Kaye ("Dusky and Checkered Wings" by Anna Kaye); Courtesy of Anthony Camera

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How do you go from being a software engineer to producing 1,500 to 2,500 bonbons a week in your basement? For Liane Pensack-Rinehart, it started with a weekend pastry school program. Demand quickly grew for the organic, fair-trade chocolates she began making in 2019 under the name Colorado Cocoa Pod in her Green Valley Ranch home. There, it takes Pensack-Rinehart four days to produce each batch of jewel-like rounds (around $23 for six) and glossy tablets (starting at $16), often inspired by the flavors—milk tea, caramel and black sesame, matcha—she grew up devouring as a child of Chinese and Japanese descent. She makes all her fillings from scratch, hand-paints the exteriors with colored cocoa butter, and slowly heats and cools the chocolate to yield a smooth, shiny finish using three tempering machines before selling her goods at pop-ups and through her online shop. For Valentine's Day, look for lychee, passion fruit guava, and strawberries and cream masterpieces that are *almost* too beautiful to eat.

—**PATRICIA KAOWTHUMRONG**

PHOTOGRAPH BY SARAH BANKS / STYLING BY CHARLI ORNETT

Little One

Uptown's Xiquita is ambitious and has delicious potential. It just needs to grow into itself. —AMANDA M. FAISON

^ *From left:* Chefs Erasmo Casiano and Rene Gonzalez Mendez; the tamal Oaxaqueño, salsas y tostadas, carne asada, agua fresca, and tortillas with jalapeño ash butter

When you walk into Xiquita, the new Uptown restaurant from James Beard Foundation Award–nominated chef Erasmo Casiano, one of the first things you'll notice is a vibrant mural of multicolored corn cobs. The painting, by Panama-born artist and former Denver resident Jahna Rae, is a clue to what Xiquita (pronounced "Chiquita," like the banana), is all about. Another hint: The menu, written in Spanish and a variety of Mexico's Indigenous languages, points to Casiano's commitment to ancestral foodways.

An English-translated menu is tucked beneath the primary version, and non-native Spanish speakers needn't feel shy about using it. Xiquita is an unapologetic ode to the dynamic cuisine of Mexico City, and diners will benefit from learning all they can about how that translates to the kitchen's ingredients and techniques. In fact, although much of the food was exceptional, the waitstaff left me wanting more when it came to sharing the restaurant's mission—or at least expounding on the virtues of the dishes in front of me.

When presented with the outstanding, complimentary housemade tortillas with jalapeño ash butter, I would have loved to hear about the process of nixtamalization and the relevance of ash across Xiquita's menu. (Nixtamalization is the ancient method of soaking corn in water alkalized with ash to render it tender enough to grind into masa, which forms the base for tamales and corn tortillas, among other things.) To truly understand Xiquita, diners need to understand the keystone, labor-intensive role corn plays in the kitchen.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY SARAH BANKS

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An observant visitor might draw that conclusion by noting that masa dishes make up a third of the menu. The queen of that section is the tamal Oaxaqueño. Steamed in a banana leaf, the tender, almost custardlike masa arrives smothered in an earthy, black, deeply rich mole that seems to reach back centuries to the central highlands of Mexico where mole was born. Queso fresco, toasted sesame seeds, and the zing of white onion rings modernize the plate. Fourteen dollars for this labor of love is a downright steal.

Casiano, who debuted nationally acclaimed, locally beloved Lucina in Park Hill in 2022, has handed Xiquita's toque to executive chef Rene Gonzalez Mendez, who spent years in Mexico City's fine-dining restaurants (and made an impression on Denver diners at the now-closed Pato's Tacos). You can taste that pedigree in items like the must-order hoja santa. These bundles of Oaxaca cheese and a salsa of charred, slightly fruity morita chiles are packaged in the dish's namesake sacred leaf, historically used in Aztec rituals. Redolent of anise, mint, and black pepper, the bright green herb stands up against sautéed mushrooms and dried chile and garlic notes from the ladle's worth of salsa macha it sits upon. Crowning the gorgeous dish is a tiny tostada dusted with ash and marigold petals.

Pair those deep flavors with the simple martini sucio. The smooth, delicately floral cocktail will ruin you for other dirty martinis. Or, if it's on offer, lean into a crisp glass of Bodegas Henri Lurton, a Mexican Sauvignon Blanc.

Sadly, even those delightful sips weren't enough to smooth over a few big missteps. One night in particular, there was such an aggressive use of salt that my dining companion and I both flinched when nibbling the sikil pak: slivered rounds of grilled beet over a Yucatan tomato and pepita spread topped with nubs of goat cheese and sesame-seed-rich pinche salsa macha.

We had a similar experience with the stunningly presented tikin xic. The daily catch—kampachi, that evening—was rubbed with adobo, wrapped in banana leaf, and grilled. Sadly, the fish was mightily overcooked, and the accompanying onion-habanero relish on top was a salt bomb. Meanwhile, the charbroiled oysters, garnished with charred jalapeño butter and maize powder, were wholly unsuccessful, with an off-putting algae flavor. (When I mentioned this to a well-versed food friend who had recently ordered the starter, she relayed that her oysters had been excellent, briny, and bright. I'll chalk it up to an off night, but I won't order them again.)

I have full confidence that with more time, Xiquita will be exquisite, just like its sister restaurant Lucina. Beyond correcting the kitchen missteps, though, I desire more connection at a restaurant so steeped in heart and tradition. I wish for more background on the dishes I order and why they matter to the kitchen. I want to feel the pride. Xiquita, which translates to "little girl," is finding her way. I can't wait for her to be big and bold.

^ **The hoja santa with Oaxaca cheese and chiles atop mushrooms and salsa macha**

XIQUITA
500 E. 19th Ave.
xiquita.co

The Draw:
A restaurant with a ton of heart and a clear viewpoint

The Drawback:
Not all items are dialed in; dishes deserve more explanation than currently given

Noise Level:
Medium

Don't Miss:
Hoja santa; any of the masa dishes, but especially the tamal Oaxaqueño; martini sucio

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Alma Fonda Fina, Cozobi Fonda Fina, and Mezcaleria Alma

Luckily, there are multiple opportunities to taste the fare of chef Johnny Curiel. His Michelin-starred LoHi restaurant Alma Fonda Fina pays homage to his Guadalajaran roots; Boulder's Cozobi Fonda Fina hosts an impressive nixtamalization program; and three-month-old Mezcaleria Alma serves small plates and agave spirits next door to Alma Fonda Fina.

Mi Tierra Caliente

When the trio of Ayax Silva, Sandra Calderon, and Fernanda Calderon opened Mi Tierra Caliente in Arvada in 2023, they wanted to turn the spotlight on the cuisine of Michoacán: All three are from the western state in Mexico. Settle into their colorful restaurant and order the dishes denoted as Michoacán, such as the morisqueta, a family recipe of rice and pinto beans topped with fried pork simmered in green chile.

La Reyna Del Sur ˅

Tlayudas—the large, sturdy tostada-like creations that resemble thin-crust pizzas—have become part of Oaxaca's culinary legacy. Find them with all manner of toppings (refried black beans, chorizo, avocado, fiery salsa) at chef Ruben Hernandez's Oaxacan-centric food truck, La Reyna Del Sur, as it toggles between Golden and Morrison.

Courtesy of Rey Guzman (La Reyna Del Sur)

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Bone Deep

Stephen Graham Jones says he will never run out of ways to murder people, but the Boulder horror author's most stirring talent lies in carving humanity into his characters.

BY SPENCER CAMPBELL

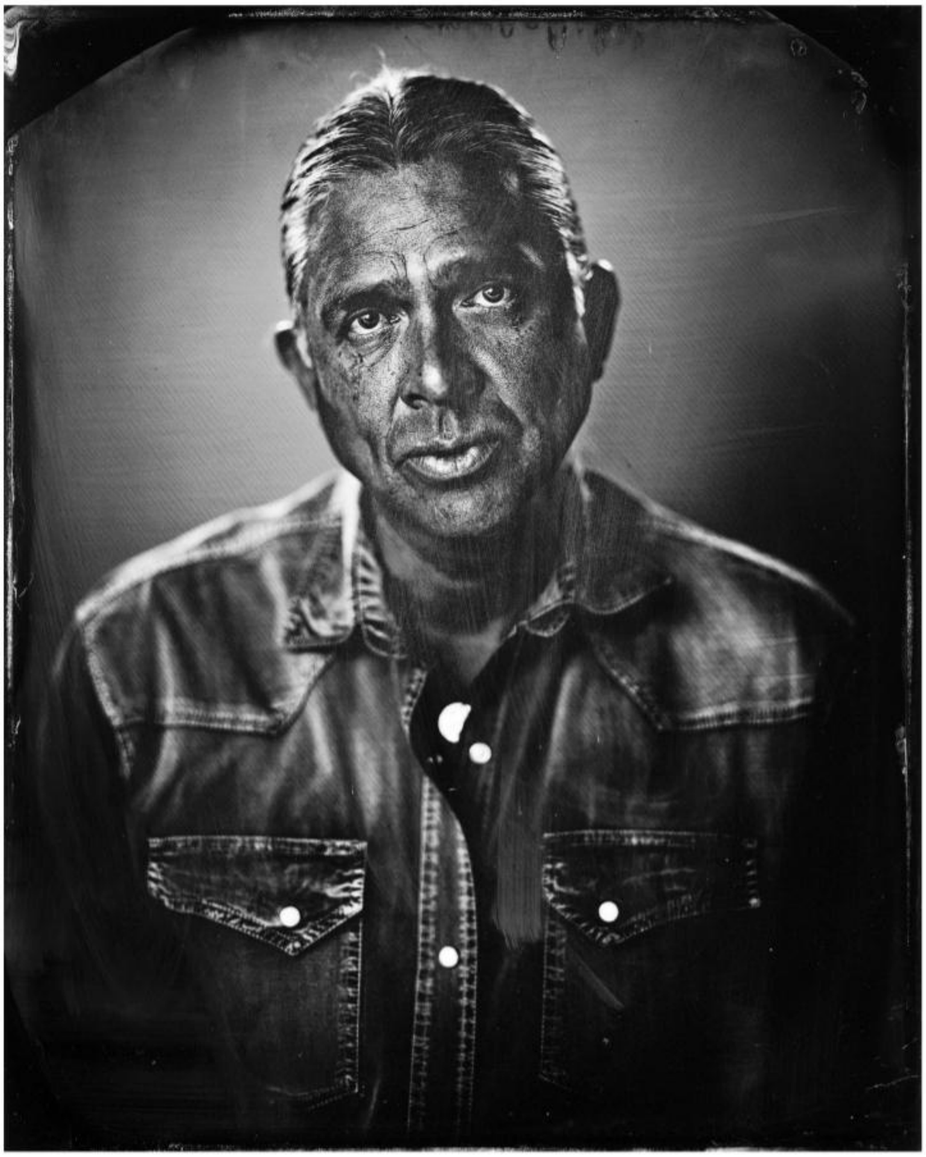
Stephen Graham Jones loves knives—slashing implements of any kind, really. His first task during a recent reorganization of his desk? Figuring out where to put his "big knife." (Right next to the computer monitor, of course.) During lunch this past December, the Boulder author whips out a blade from his belt and marvels over its Damascus titanium edge. "This is my dress knife," Jones says.

Perhaps sharp objects serve as motivation, though less directly than they once did: As a young, struggling writer living in a Dallas suburb, Jones worked a series of warehouse jobs to pay his bills. He rarely got to his computer before 11 p.m. Exhausted, he'd often fall asleep, collapsing face-first on his desk. To stay awake, Jones gathered a few small knives and glued them around his keyboard—blades up.

Jones, who turns 53 this month, is also a shameless slasher movie buff. He drives a bright yellow truck emblazoned with Freddy Krueger, Jason Voorhees, and Michael Myers stickers. His office at the University of Colorado Boulder, where Jones is the Ivena Reilly Baldwin Endowed Chair of English, is filled with collectibles, including a plastic chainsaw.

He's seen slashers you've never heard of—like 1982's *Girls Nite Out*, in which college students are terrorized by the school's mascot, a bear—and they still terrify him. He enjoys discussing the minutiae of each movie so much that sometimes his long-suffering wife, Nancy, will hold up her hand and demand: "OK, no more nerd talk." That catalog of horror no doubt contributes to his facility with murder. "I'm not going to live long enough to write down all the ways I'd like to kill people," he says.

These admissions are made even more disconcerting through the manner in which Jones delivers them. His voice is small, his demeanor reserved—like Hannibal Lecter stripped of the accent and pretension. Tall and strikingly handsome, he has long, dark hair that's turning gray, and he favors boots and black. At a recent appearance at the Texas Book Festival in Austin, he wore a button-down with a cemetery scene on the front.



In short, if you were to guess Jones' literary pursuits, you'd likely venture: "campy horror." You would not be completely wrong. Jones has released 25 novels since his first was published in 2000, and the roster includes titles such as *Zombie Bake-Off* and *It Came from Del Rio,* part one of the Bunnyhead Chronicles. But you wouldn't be completely right, either.

PHOTOGRAPH BY MATTHEW DEFEO

5280 SCENE CALENDAR

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Joy on Tap

2121 Children's Museum Drive Denver, CO 80211 | 7:00 to 10:00 p.m.

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Information and tickets at mychildsmuseum.org.

Puccini's La Bohème

Ellie Caulkins Opera House | February 22, 25, 27, 28, March 2

In a tiny attic in Paris's Latin Quarter, artists live the bohemian life, navigating love, heartbreak, and tight budgets. Puccini's blockbuster La Bohème explores the fragility of life and love through the tumultuous relationships of Mimì and Rodolfo, and Marcello and Musetta.

Information and tickets at bit.ly/OCBoheme.

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Information and tickets at 5280scene.com/5280-brunch-event.

Between the neck-severing and the corpse-gobbling, Jones cuts deep into universal human truths. He's won four Bram Stoker Awards, the horror genre's top honor. His latest novel, *The Buffalo Hunter Hunter*, set to be published next month, recounts the killing spree of a Blackfeet vampire following the real-life Marias Massacre of 1870. Under Jones' direction, what sounds like a straightforward revenge fest becomes a thorny study of justice: When does vengeance end? When is the bloodbath enough?

"Here's someone who has a totally different sort of background compared to me in terms of where we lived, who we met, who we grew up with," says Paul Tremblay, a horror author and Jones' friend. "But within the stories—even if they're not pleasant stories, because a lot of them aren't—he's able to convey not only empathy for the characters, but there's also an emotional integrity to his stories. They feel real." That's because, in many ways, they are.

A FEW OF THE MORE innovative scenarios that have appeared in Jones' pages: decapitation by Cadillac, a werewolf kidnapped by an exterminator for his urine's poisonlike properties, and cannabis plants that eat people. But that's fiction. In the real world, Jones craves routine. What keeps him up most at night, in fact, is the prospect of dining at a new restaurant. "I do not like a menu that I have not seen," he says. "That is the most terrifying thing." He sticks to known quantities at chains. Last night, it was Chipotle. Today, for lunch, it's Chipotle again.

He's seated on the patio of the only outpost the Denver-born burrito-maker has in Boulder, a few blocks from his office at CU, where he's worked since 2008. The venue isn't the only constant. Jones usually orders the same entrée. Coconut shrimp at Red Lobster. Burger King? Double Whopper, plain. And here, at Chipotle, it's chicken soft tacos.

It's no wonder Jones seeks stability. Growing up, he lived mostly with his mom and usually near the West Texas oil town of Midland. But the family moved a lot, and not always to ideal environs. For a year in junior high, Jones stayed with his great-uncle, who raised cattle and horses. The livestock often busted through the fence and became roadkill. Jones' great-uncle piled the carcasses near the house. After school, Jones would grab a snack and play among the bodies. "I had so much fun just taking them apart and looking at them," he says.

During the 1980s, his mother married a man with whom they settled in Colorado Springs. Jones clashed with his stepfather, the two often threatening each other with knives and guns. To protect himself, Jones slept with a 12-gauge shotgun.

Rather than developing an aversion to violence, Jones embraced it. "He's always got these great stories, like, 'Hey, you know when you were a kid and you played that game where you'd stab a friend but try not to break their skin?' " says Tod Goldberg, a writer and former colleague. When Jones was 17 and living in Midland, an acquaintance attempted to die by suicide at Jones' apartment. Jones and his roommates decided to pass the time waiting for the ambulance by seeing who could throw a knife closest to their own shoe. Jones speared his foot and won the wager.

These games, whether you think them amusing or gruesome, were cathartic. "I tried to valorize [violence]," Jones says. "I don't know what the other option is. If you don't embrace it, then you're saying, *This part of my life doesn't matter anymore*, and it seems like you're less of a person."

If Jones found release in risky behaviors, he discovered escape through other means: a trove

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of mass-market paperbacks an uncle stored in his trailer; tales of Bat Boy in *The National Inquirers* he read at the grocery store while his mom shopped; Michael, Freddy, and Jason movies rented by eighth graders on the sly from an obliging video clerk in Wimberly, Texas. One of his friends' dads would wait until the kids were into their second or third slasher of the night in the garage and then scrape Freddy fingers along the metal door. "We'd blast out the side door," Jones writes in one of his acknowledgments, "and we'd run like I've never run since, tears slipping back from my eyes, my mouth actually hurting because my smile was so wide, nothing but darkness yawning open in front of me. I ran into that darkness, and am still running."

In the early 1990s, he was a student at Texas Tech University, about 120 miles from Midland, when the police pulled him from English class. His uncle had been badly burned and airlifted to the local intensive care unit. Jones sat in the hospital room for three days, becoming so bored that he wrote a ghost story. An instructor entered it into a writing competition, which Jones won. He got a $50 check. "And that was the first time I ever turned lies into groceries," Jones says.

JONES' DEBUT NOVEL, *The Fast Red Road: A Plainsong,* is a trippy road-trip saga that follows a Native American protagonist as he travels across New Mexico, encountering aliens and ghosts along the way. He followed that in 2003 with *The Beautiful Sinners* (about a serial killer targeting Native children) and *The Bird Is Gone* (a murder mystery revolving around an act of Congress that could return the Great Plains to Native Americans). All three novels differed in genre but were categorized under the same keyword: Indigenous.

Jones is Blackfeet through his father. "I grew up always being the only one like me, and in Texas, that's not so good," Jones says. At Thanksgiving, his elementary school teachers would ask him, the lone Native American in class, if tribes really wore feathers in their headbands. A college professor singled him out for insight into Chief Bromden, the narrator of *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*.

There are experts in Blackfeet history: While writing *The Buffalo Hunter Hunter*, Jones consulted a friend fluent in Blackfoot vernacular to ensure that Good Stab, the vampire, spoke like a member of the tribe would have during the 19th century. But, Jones says, most contemporary Blackfeet (like most people) read John Grisham and Danielle Steel, not tribal histories.

After his first few novels, Jones realized his book event audience had begun treating him as an authority on Native American culture, just as his teachers had. "I did not like it even a little bit," Jones says. He made a decision to swerve hard into slashers, zombies, and werewolves, "as a way of telling all those people, *I dare you to try to find the Indian stuff in this*," Jones says. At the same time, Jones tried to publish works in the vein of David Foster Wallace. "What happened was about 2006, 2007, I feel like I became two writers," Jones says. "One was on kind of a literary track, and one was doing the schlockiest genre stuff I could think of."

It wasn't until 2016's *Mongrels* that Jones stitched together his two halves—death dealer and artist. Ostensibly a werewolf novel, *Mongrels* allowed Jones to play with the frothiest of monster folklore, and the book features its share of cryptic legend, blood, and corpses de cuisine. The violence pulses, but the book's steady heart is a lonely boy whose disconnection seems to mirror Jones' own as a child: His family is

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PATIO SEASON IS CLOSER THAN YOU THINK

werewolf, but he can't become one himself. The pack moves every few months. In each new setting, some form of violence awaits.

Mongrels isn't the only time a glint of Jones' reality has appeared in his fiction. In *My Heart Is a Chainsaw*, his high-school-age heroine seeks refuge from a killer in a pile of rotting elk corpses. Jones didn't connect with Blackfeet culture until he was 12, when his father first took him hunting on the tribe's reservation in Montana. Consequently, to him, "going after meat is fundamentally what it means to be Blackfeet," and he returns to hunting repeatedly when crafting Blackfeet characters.

Jones is quick to emphasize he doesn't use writing as therapy. When struggling with his first novel, he started reaching into his memory bank for inspiration; putting himself on the page advanced the plot and proved a conduit for creating an emotional response in readers. It's difficult to imagine, however, that dissecting himself doesn't result in an examination of his parts. "I think Stephen witnessed a lot of stuff that needed to find some kind of expression," says William Kuskin, the chair of CU's English Department. "Horror is a genre container that allows him to explore that stuff."

ALTHOUGH JONES DEVELOPED a cult following early in his career, as of about a decade ago, he'd never risen higher than midlist. Mediocre sales weren't entirely his fault. Horror was dead. The genre had been suffocated in the 1990s under the weight of big-name authors such as Stephen King and Clive Barker, whose successes inspired so many copycats that the category became watered down with dreck. Eventually, King et al. moved to the mainstream fiction aisle, and horror sales plummeted. Readers avoided the genre so completely that publishers rechristened new titles as either dark fantasy or supernatural suspense.

That began to change in the 2010s—first in cinema, where production house A24 started releasing a canon of horrifying yet remarkably acted art-house horror movies, such as *The Witch* and *Midsommar*. Then, in 2017, Jordan Peele's *Get Out* earned more than $200 million at the box office, its message of racial appropriation wrapped in a body-snatching narrative.

Joe Monti, an editor at Saga Press (an imprint of Simon & Schuster), was among those who flocked to *Get Out*. When he left the theater, Monti decided he needed to amplify marginalized voices. America was confronting difficult topics, he says, and the genre had long been a vehicle for conversations about race, class, and culture. (*Vulture*'s "30 Great Eat-The-Rich Horror Movies" begins with 1962's *El Angel Exterminador*, about wealthy partygoers trapped in "their palace of excess.") Not only is it cathartic, but while science fiction and fantasy are often divorced from reality, horror at its most frightening is tethered to it. At long last, horror books were poised to rise from the grave.

Jones, meanwhile, was determined to write a *Three's Company* novel. (He's a big fan of Jack Tripper.) When a lawyer told him he couldn't—it was, you know, copyrighted—Jones suggested a *Friday the 13th* book. Same problem. But for this one, Jones thought of a work-around. Instead of Jason Voorhees' hockey mask, his monster would wear an elk head. Rather than being set in Crystal Lake, Jones' story would emanate from the Blackfeet reservation in Montana. As usual, Jones wove his own life into the narrative: The monster seeks revenge for a crime committed by four teenagers while they were hunting on the reservation.

Monti received the manuscript in 2019. It was emotional and challenging, and—because it's Jones—described in one scene a man cutting an elk calf from his wife's stomach. Monti

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bought the novel a week later, and *The Only Good Indians* became a surprise bestseller in 2020. It earned a spot on *Time*'s must-read books of the year list and a *Los Angeles Times* Book Prize.

Horror books written by white authors released around the same time did not perform as well. Monti chalks that up to *Good Indians*' perspective on the Native American experience. Whether he liked it or not, the literary world had again cast Jones not as an author, but as a Native American author.

ON THE CHIPOTLE PATIO, his tacos long since devoured, Jones folds his Damascus titanium blade into its handle and clips it onto his belt. "Man, I love this knife," he says. He doesn't get much opportunity to clean kills these days, though. Ever since *Good Indians* came out, his autumns—hunting season—have become packed with book events. He's a popular draw in October because of Halloween and in November because it's Native American History Month.

Being typecast doesn't bother him anymore. Jones revels in the opportunity to challenge assumptions about what it means to be Native American. On panels, audiences might expect him to expound on the history of Indigenous rights. Instead, he talks about Jason Voorhees.

In much the same way, the publishing world expected Jones to follow *Good Indians* with something similar—something inherently "Indian." So, he wrote a slasher trilogy. The first book in the series, 2021's *My Heart is a Chainsaw,* centers on Jade, a high-school horror-movie obsessive who believes a slasher like Jason has come to her town. She's ecstatic by their arrival—likely because the mounting deaths distract from her personal trauma of parental neglect and abuse. Yes, Jade is Blackfeet, but, as Jones writes in the acknowledgments, her heritage (much like the author's) is incidental, not instrumental, to the novel. *Chainsaw* won Jones his fourth Bram Stoker Award.

Now, five books after *Good Indians* (he also squeezed in the standalone novels *The Babysitter Lives* and *I Was a Teenage Slasher*), Jones is publishing *The Buffalo Hunter Hunter* next month. Told through the journal entries of a minister, *Buffalo Hunter* recounts the pastor's conversations with a Blackfeet named Good Stab—who arrives in town just as skinned bodies, drained of their blood, begin turning up nearby. Jones did little to research the minister. "I made it up," he says. But in addition to consulting his friend on the finer points of the Blackfoot language, Jones also read *Beneath the Backbone of the World*, a history of the tribe, and consulted primary letters and documents surrounding the Marias Massacre, during which the U.S. Army killed almost 200 people.

Jones concedes these elements make *The Buffalo Hunter Hunter* instrumentally Native American—what people wanted after *Good Indians*. But he says readers shouldn't see the novel as a harbinger of things to come, or as some sort of evolution in a journey of self-discovery. In *I Was a Teenage Slasher*, a Blackfeet character says everything she owns is Indian, because *she* is Indian. "That's the way I feel about my books," Jones says. He'll go wherever the darkness takes him.

On this early winter afternoon, that's to the movies. Jones' Friday is wide open—no classes, no weekend book events to prepare for—and *Werewolves*, a new dystopian horror movie described in at least one review as "cheesy, but in a fun way," is playing nearby. If he runs, Jones can make the matinee. ▲▲

Spencer Campbell, *5280*'s deputy editor, watches horror movies through his fingers. Send feedback to letters@5280.com.

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Photo: Asuka Sasaki by Jeff Nelson

LESS IS MORE

INCREASINGLY, DENVERITES ARE OPTING FOR BEVERAGES WITH LOWER—OR EVEN NONEXISTENT—ALCOHOL CONTENTS. HERE, THE BEST AND BUZZIEST MOCKTAILS, SESSION BEERS, AND BARS FOR MINDFUL DRINKING IN AND AROUND THE MILE HIGH CITY.

EDITED BY JESSICA LARUSSO

PHOTOGRAPHY BY SARAH BANKS / STYLING BY CHARLI ORNETT

Denver nutrition consultant Blair Horton stocks her mocktail bar with teas, tinctures, fruits, and herbs—and shares recipes on her popular Instagram account, @holisticrendezvous.

Colorado-made, grape-based NA options include Grüvi's Dry Secco 2.0 and Bubbly Rosé 2.0 as well as Horizon Verjus, a citrusy mixer.

HORIZON VERJUS
Late Harvest Verjus
Produced from 100% Colorado wine grapes
Non - Alcoholic
750 ml (23.35 fl. Oz.)
GRÜVI
Bubbly Rosé 2.0
ALCOHOL-REMOVED WINE
DISCOVERY SERIES
HORIZON VERJUS
GRÜVI
Dry Secco 2.0

→ When Alex Jump started bartending 12 years ago, a customer asking for a nonalcoholic (NA) option usually sent her scrambling to dust off an expired bottle of O'Doul's. In fact, she didn't work for an establishment with NA drinks on the menu until she was hired to open the Denver location of illustrious NYC cocktail bar Death & Co in 2018. Today, she says, "a lot of people are exploring sobriety or just mindful drinking"—and local bars, restaurants, and beverage makers are responding by offering more alcohol by volume (ABV) diversity in the form of session and NA beers, mocktails, and dealcoholized wines. In fact, Colorado is one of the top five states for NA sales, which have increased 25 to 30 percent in the United States each of the past few years.

The massive growth is being driven by wellness-minded millennials and Gen Zers, who tend to alternate between boozy beverages and zero-proof drinks year-round, not just during popular abstinence challenges such as Dry January and Sober October. Now an independent food and beverage consultant, Jump says she often tells clients, "If you don't have nonalcoholic cocktails on your menu, you just hate money." (She's also clear on her message to consumers: Thoughtfully developed mocktails with high-quality ingredients cost just as much to make as their boozy counterparts, and the technology required to remove alcohol from wine and beer is expensive, so don't expect NA options to be cheap.)

For Jump, promoting mindful drinking is about more than profits, though: After seeing the effects of excessive alcohol and illicit drug use on hospitality workers, in early 2020 she co-founded Focus on Health, which advocates for well-being in the industry and educates bar professionals on ABV variety. The ultimate goal? Making it easier for everyone to opt into elevated, tasty low- and zero-proof beverages—like the ones on these pages.

> "Over the last two or three years, we've really seen the pendulum swing toward creativity and acceptance—people wanting to explore and learn more and try new things." —ALEX JUMP

SOCIAL LUBRICANT

Denver-based Grüvi is on a mission to make mingling sans booze deliciously fun.

Like so many successful companies, Grüvi was born when its founders, the sister-brother team of Anika and Niki Sawni, couldn't find what they were looking for. "We started to question the normalization of our drinking culture," Anika says, "but Niki and I love going out for dinner with friends and entertaining. The biggest barrier for us cutting our alcohol consumption was not having alternative options that felt equally as exciting and tasted good." So, in 2019, the Denverites launched Grüvi. Nearly six years and a few high-profile awards later—including a World Beer Cup Gold for the brand's golden lager—Grüvi's NA beers and wines are in almost 5,000 stores across North America.

The Sawnis spent the past year tweaking recipes and updating packaging designs for a rebrand that launched in December. Now, Anika says, they're turning their focus to getting into more gathering places. "A big evolution we're seeing in the space is that shift from at-home drinking to on-premise—bars and restaurants and venues," Anika says, adding that Grüvi is already on offer at Mission Ballroom, Ball Arena, and Fiddler's Green Amphitheatre. "Our vision is to normalize NA beverages and get to a point where they're celebrated—which we actually don't feel that far from anymore."

START YOUR NA JOURNEY

IF YOU LOVE: Prosecco
TRY: Dry Secco 2.0
BECAUSE: This new version of Grüvi's take on sparkling wine is dealcoholized, meaning the crisp bubbly started as regular wine. The resulting drink has more authentic flavors and aromas than formulated nonalcoholic wine, which doesn't go through fermentation.

IF YOU LOVE: Stout
TRY: Mocha Moment
BECAUSE: Like Grüvi's wines, its beers are dealcoholized, but then they go through a final fermentation cycle to reintroduce elements—such as Mocha Moment's rich coffee and chocolate flavors—that can be lost during the alcohol removal process.

IF YOU LOVE: Red Wine
TRY: Sangria
BECAUSE: Most NA red wines taste like grape juice, but not Grüvi's effervescent red sangria. The fruit flavors are balanced by cinnamon and clove, and in 2023 it earned a 95 from the International Wine and Spirit Competition, making it the highest-rated NA wine in North America that year.

IF YOU LOVE: Hazy IPA
TRY: Juicy Dayz IPA
BECAUSE: Your palate may not be able to tell the difference between this tropical, citrusy sipper and its high-ABV counterparts, but your waistline will: Each 12-ounce can has 50 calories, versus the 200 to 250 in standard hazies.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY JORGE ARÉVALO

A BETTER BAR CART

Say goodbye to hangovers and hello to sippers that actually aid your mind, body, and mood.

Stocking a mocktail bar at home doesn't have to mean splurging on pricey spirit-free liquors. Local holistic nutrition consultant Blair Horton—whose nearly 365,000 Instagram followers come to @holisticrendezvous for a steady stream of zero-proof drink recipes—prefers simple, fresh ingredients such as tea, fruit, and herbs, usually served in a fancy glass. Horton avoids gluten and drinks coffee and alcohol only rarely, instead creating "everyday elixirs" (the name of her forthcoming book) with functional benefits and no boozy downsides.

"I don't want my mocktail to be something I *have* to have because I'm not having a drink," says Horton, who mixes her gorgeous viral beverages (think: spritzes layered with ripe persimmons and sage or virgin Pimm's Cups brimming with oranges, strawberries, cucumber, lemon, and ginger) from her RiNo home. "To me, we're taking out the alcohol, but we're adding so many other good things, so it's actually cooler than a cocktail." Here, her go-to elements—most of which are easy to find at grocery stores or local apothecaries—for next-level mocktail-making. —*Riane Menardi Morrison*

> "The 'sober curious' term kind of annoys me, because isn't that just a healthy relationship with alcohol? Shouldn't everyone be able to drink some days and not drink other days if they feel like it?" —BLAIR HORTON

TEAS

For the bases of her drinks, Horton often uses teas, which provide antioxidants, flavonoids (beneficial plant compounds), and astringency, aka that dry, puckering mouthfeel delivered by many red wines. Green tea supplies energy, chai aids digestion, and chamomile facilitates relaxation. Try Organic India teas, based in Boulder, or high-quality loose-leaf varieties.

FRESH PRODUCE

The most nutrient-dense ingredients in Horton's bar cart? Fresh fruits and veggies. For optimal health and sustainability benefits, Horton follows what's in season. This time of year, look for kiwis, pomegranates, and citrus fruits such as blood oranges and kumquats.

TINCTURES & BITTERS

These concentrated herbal extracts—which can be made with or without alcohol—add depth of flavor and sometimes even a wellness boost. Horton likes Louisville-based WishGarden Herbs' Liquid Bliss Mood Elevator, a blend of passionflower, damiana, cacao, and hawthorn.

MILK & HONEY

Horton adds a touch of honey to most elixirs, which sweetens them without adding color. Coconut milk is her go-to creamy element, thanks to its neutral flavor, healthy fats, and penchant for not separating.

HERBS & ROOTS

Stock functional plants like digestion-friendly ginger, allergy-fighting nettles, vitamin C–rich hibiscus and rosehips, and antioxidant-laden butterfly pea flower, which turns purple when exposed to citrus. Shop fresh and dried herbs at spots like Cherry Creek's Apothecary Tinctura or Balanced Root Apothecary in Capitol Hill.

GARNISHES

Dress your mocktail for an occasion by serving it in a beautiful glass, creating a zero-waste rim by blending citrus zest with sugar or salt, and topping it all off with a slice of dried fruit. "That always makes it feel really elevated to me," she says.

EQUIPMENT

A muddler, jigger, blender, and strainer make mixing easy. Horton's pro tip: Blitz fruit in a blender and strain out the solids for homemade juices.

To learn how to make the cover mocktail (Horton's Self-Love Lemonade), the NA ginger-pineapple fizz on page 37, and more bliss-inducing bevvies, visit 5280.com/mocktail-cart.

LEVEL UP

In Breckenridge, fine-dining restaurant Rootstalk offers sophisticated mocktails that fuel, rather than foil, mountain adventures.

Most of Colorado's thrills take place at altitude, where a few full-strength nightcaps might mean missing first tracks the next day. "Even if you're just coming from Denver to Breckenridge, the first night or two is an acclimation process, and alcohol affects you differently up here," says Patrick Murphy, a longtime bar and restaurant pro who went sober three years ago. "You can feel the effects very quickly, and it can leave you feeling dehydrated and groggy in the morning."

That's why Murphy, who is a partner in both Rootstalk and its sister eatery Radicato, recently introduced a slate of zero-proof options at the upscale restaurants on Breck's charming Main Street—going so far as to develop his own NA versions of gin, bourbon, and vermouth. At Rootstalk, diners can even opt for nonalcoholic pairings to go with 2024 James Beard Foundation Award–winning chef Matt Vawter's tasting menu. To find out how these concoctions help imbibers shred their forthcoming black diamond runs, we asked Murphy to explain the healing properties inside the Free Bird, one of Rootstalk's most popular mocktails. —*RMM*

INSIDE EVERY FREE BIRD

1. A nonalcoholic bitter aperitif that aids digestion
2. Fresh pineapple juice, rich in vitamin B6 for energy, bromelain to reduce inflammation, and manganese to balance blood sugar
3. Fresh lime juice, packed with immune-system-boosting vitamin C
4. House-made grenadine, an antioxidant-rich pomegranate syrup that supports brain and liver health
5. Demerara, a raw sugar mixture for just the right amount of natural sweetness

COST-BENEFIT ANALYSIS

What makes Death & Co's zero-proof drinks worth $16?

When NYC-born Death & Co opened its first outpost in RiNo in 2018, the cocktail den raised the bar for mixed drinks in the Mile High City—and raised eyebrows for its Big Apple prices. Denverites quickly came to appreciate the skill and high-quality ingredients behind the boozy sips. But will they pay $16 apiece for its zero-proof concoctions?

Bar manager Scott Ruggiero thinks so. "We take a really thoughtful approach to create the same texture you get from alcohol," Ruggiero says. For example, the martini-esque New Territory (*far left*) uses two Seedlip NA spirits, which retail at about $32 for 700 milliliters. There's a bit of verjus blanc and coconut extract. Lime juice goes through a centrifuge to spin out any trace of pulp before being combined with sugar to create a perfectly clear cordial. The staff juices pineapples to make a syrup with gum arabic powder. Once all those ingredients are stirred, the drink is garnished with a grapefruit expression and a twist of lime. By appearance, taste, or cost, no one would know it's a mocktail—and *that*, Ruggiero says, is what makes it priceless for many guests.

GOING GREEN

How grape byproduct Horizon Verjus could lower ABVs *and* waste in local bar programs.

Thanks to hospitality veteran Kevin Murphy, wine isn't the only sipper coming from Colorado's vineyards. The former restaurant beverage director first learned about verjus—a zero-proof liquid derived from pressing unripe grapes—at a Chicago farm-to-table eatery, where he centered his drink program around the tart liquid, using it in place of citrus in craft cocktails and mocktails. "Verjus is not overly sweet," Murphy says. "It has a weight and natural acidity that drinks more like wine."

After moving to Colorado in 2021, Murphy began working to bottle and distribute a locally sourced version under the label Horizon Verjus. Verjus ("green juice" in French) isn't a new concept: The ingredient has been used in cooking and beverage-making since the Middle Ages. But it has recently been gaining traction in the United States, and Murphy hopes the increasing interest in nonalcoholic alternatives to products like triple sec and limoncello will only bolster that growth.

The process of creating verjus begins midsummer when winemakers thin out grape vines. To make his, Murphy partners with Palisade winery the Ordinary Fellow, where, instead of being left on the ground, the hard, green, unripe castaways are collected and turned into the brand's Early Season Verjus, which is vegetal with bright minerality. Deeper into the fall, grapes that didn't ripen enough become the Late Harvest Verjus, with notes of red apple, tart strawberry, and hibiscus.

Verjus isn't just a flavorful mixer, though. It's good for the environment, too: One bottle of Horizon Verjus replaces 16 (likely imported) lemons. For a taste, visit Aurora's Annette—one of more than a dozen Colorado eateries and drinkeries that stock it—and order the NA Negroni Sbagliato, made with Horizon Verjus' Late Harvest Verjus, Strongwater Aperitif Spritz, and NA gin Amass Riverine. —*Sarah Banks*

Aaron Colussi

From Corpse Reviver, a bubbly energy-boosting beverage, to Prost Brewing Co.'s new NA Pilsner to Weld-Werks Brewing Co.'s low-ABV Itsy Bits to Andiamo Brew's sub-four-percent ABV suds, options abound for conscientious Denver drinkers.

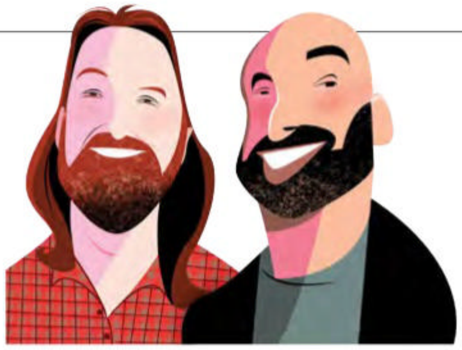
Corpse Reviver
Hydration Libation
Electrolyte Blend
Guava Rose
Prost
Non Alcoholic
Pilsner
Non-Alcoholic Brew
Itsy Bits
WeldWerks Brewing Company
andiamo brew
Piccolito
Italian Pils
Brewed in Colorado
3.5% ALC/VOL
1 Pint

THE LOWDOWN

Nearly year-old Andiamo Brew is taking its cue from the Italians with a lineup of beers that are all under four percent ABV.

After reconnecting at a memorial for their late grandparents more than a decade ago, cousins Brian Terra (*right*) and Kevin Barnes vowed to start a brewery that would honor their Italian heritage. To them, that translated to exclusively crafting beers with less than four percent ABV, in tribute to the sessionable Pilsners, lagers, and ales popular in many European countries. In April 2024, Andiamo Brew—translation: "Let's go"—was born. Using equipment at Copper Kettle Brewing Company in southeast Denver, Barnes (brewer) and Terra (sales and business manager) produce and sell kegs to taprooms and restaurants around town. We caught up with the recent Centennial State transplants to chat about the brand and why there's a brewing market for low-ABV beer in Denver. —*Patricia Kaowthumrong*

> "I think lower ABV is the future.... That's a trend that's really going to develop in the next five to 10 years, so we wanted to get ahead of it."
>
> —KEVIN BARNES



5280: What made you decide to focus on sub-four-percent ABV beers?
Kevin Barnes: I see a new brewery launching a nonalcoholic beer every week, it seems. I see brewers who are leading trends making more four percent, five percent low-ABV beers. I think that's what brewers and the mature craft beer connoisseur go toward now. I wanted to make the beers that I want to drink, which are low ABV and are, at the same time, traditional and modern and experimental. The kind of beers I want to drink aren't milkshake stouts.

Why Denver?
Brian Terra: I had just got out to Colorado, and [Kevin thought] it was the perfect spot to really to put this idea to work. He said, "Let's do middle-ground beers, or low- or no-alcohol beers."
KB: In the Denver area, specifically, our concept is resonant because we've already got breweries that are very popular here like Bierstadt, which does low-alcohol traditional lagers.

How does your Italian heritage play into Andiamo's brews?
KB: We're already distinctive in doing low-ABV beer, but one more angle that is natural for us is to make all of our beers Italian-inspired. We're going to do an Italian red lager with espresso [the Caffetino, to be released this spring] and an amaro beer, eventually.
BT: We're also working on a rosé pale ale [for spring].

Has the response to your beers changed since you sold your first keg?
BT: When I first started talking to customers, some were a little skeptical. They were like, "I don't know if anybody's going to want to drink that; they're not getting the bang for their buck." Now they're telling me people are requesting low-alcohol beers more and more. I think it's catching on.

Do you think that's because the beer drinker is changing?
KB: 100 percent. People are drinking less. People are moderating their alcohol intake. Most people that drink nonalcoholic beer don't exclusively drink that. One out of their three for the night will be a nonalcoholic. It's not like they don't drink alcohol anymore. They're just supplementing—so they drink less alcohol, but they can have the same amount of beers.

Look for Andiamo's creations—such as the herbaceous Piccolito Pilsner, grapefruit-forward Flying Bear lagered pale ale, and Czech dark lager Night Music—on tap at spots across the city. A regularly updated list of locations is available at andiamobrew.com.

DAY DRINKS

Prost Brewing Co.'s Northglenn Biergarten welcomes patrons to stay awhile with yard games, hearty snacks, sessionable suds, and a new nonalcoholic Pilsner.

Day-drinking may be a beloved pastime on the Front Range, but eight-percent IPAs make it tough to last till sundown. So, when nearly 13-year-old Prost Brewing Co. turned on the taps at a 70,000-square-foot production facility and biergarten in Northglenn in January 2024, revelers were happy to discover a lineup of brews that help them prolong the fun. Prost, which also has taprooms in LoHi, Highlands Ranch, and Fort Collins, churns out kegs and cans of Pilsner, kölsch, weizenbock, and other classic German biers. More than half of those are five percent ABV or less, but this past October, the brewery went even lower by releasing a crisp, malty NA Pilsner.

There is also NA kombucha (available as a drink or a shot) and a sangrialike mocktail made with apple and cranberry juices, black tea, juniper berry, cloves, and ginger to go along with traditional cocktails, such as frozen margs and old fashioneds. That means the sprawling spot, which opens at 11 a.m. Friday through Sunday (and 2 p.m. the rest of the week), truly has something for everyone—from teetotalers to those partaking in Frühschoppen, the German and Austrian custom of boozing before noon. Visit the airy two-story bier hall for dozens of widely spaced picnic tables; garage doors that open to an artificial-turf-lined patio with lawn games, a stage for live music, and a fire pit; and a counter-service eatery that serves giant pretzels, mushroom-gravy-smothered cheese curds and fries, sausage boards, and other rib-sticking bites to soak up whatever beverage you choose. —*PK*

ADDITION BY SUBTRACTION

WeldWerks Brewing Co. is making a lower-ABV version of its flagship brew that's as good as the original—and may become even more popular.

In honor of WeldWerks Brewing Co.'s first anniversary in 2016, the Greeley-based craft brewery released a hazy IPA that quickly became its flagship product. Despite 6.7 percent ABV Juicy Bits' popularity, however, head brewer Skip Schwartz and his team haven't been afraid to mess with perfection. In fact, their Bits series has produced more than 100 variations, including Itsy Bits—a pale ale with similar fruit-forward notes and a lower ABV that has also developed a rabid following. "Juicy Bits has its own family tree," Schwartz says. "We want everyone to be able to find something [within it]." Here, a by-the-numbers snapshot of the least-boozy member of the citrus-rich beer's brood. —*PK*

3.5

The difference in ABVs between the clean and crushable Itsy Bits (5.1 percent) and the supremely creamy, double-dry-hopped Extra Extra Juicy Bits (8.6 percent). Both won medals at the 2019 Great American Beer Festival.

22

Percent less grain Itsy Bits uses, compared to Juicy Bits. While the process is similar for making low and high ABV beers, the former requires less grain, the ingredient that turns into sugar (and, eventually, alcohol) during brewing.

3

Types of hops—Citra, Mosaic, and El Dorado—added to both Itsy Bits and Juicy Bits to achieve the flavor of pulp-heavy citrus juice while maintaining a silky mouthfeel.

2025

The year WeldWerks hopes to make Itsy Bits, formerly only available occasionally, a year-round product. "I think a lot of people are trending toward…what you might call a lifestyle beer," Schwartz says.

COME ONE, COME ALL

RiNo's Honey Elixir aims to be Denver's most inclusive watering hole.

Jocasta Hanson was going about her life when a major spinal injury changed both her personal and professional trajectory. "I had to do a deep dive to understand my injury and how to treat myself naturally," Hanson says. "One of the things that was helpful was cutting out alcohol." Working as a bartender at the time, she began experimenting with mixing up tasty NA beverages for herself, and in December 2019, she opened Honey Elixir, a cozy cocktail joint tucked into the mural-filled alleyway behind Denver Central Market in RiNo.

On the menu, a variety of drinks get equal billing: Up top, the potions section is filled with alcohol-free, apothecary-inspired sips like the Scarlett Rizz, which blends Earl Grey tea, lavender, mugwort, calea (often called the "dream herb"), and clover honey with NA prosecco, pomegranate, and lemon. Next, there are two zero-proof, ceremonial-grade sipping chocolates, aka cacaos. Then comes the jun section—three fizzy, fermented green teas that are brewed in Boulder with honey, medicinal herbs, and superfoods. They're served cold, and each rings in around three to four percent ABV. Finally, there's a list of seasonal, booze-based cocktails—many sweetened with raw honey and infused with organic botanicals—followed by a selection of wines and canned beer.

But it's not just the drink lineup that's inclusive. "I'm neurodivergent, so I'm very sensory considerate," Hanson says. In Honey Elixir, that translates to rich, soothing jewel tones; velvety textures; and a high-quality sound system with dampening measures to ensure there's no distracting reverberation. "It's a space and a menu for everyone," Hanson says, "no matter where they're at in their imbibing journey."

> "I wanted to create a space that offered [a variety of ABV options] because I knew people were either wanting it or going to be. I just knew that if I'm on this journey, there are other people on this journey as well."
>
> —JOCASTA HANSON

Honey Elixir

LOW & SLOW

For a night on the town, make Fellow Traveler your destination.

In 2023, the spritz—a refreshing blend of prosecco, soda water, and an aperitif such as Aperol or Campari—broke into the top 10 most-ordered cocktails at American bars. Locally, there's no better place to taste the trendy, 10 to 12 percent ABV sipper (old fashioneds are around 35 percent) than Englewood's Fellow Traveler, a vegan bar and eatery with one of the metro's largest selections of Italian aperitifs. "It's something you can take your time with," says owner Joe Phillips, who crafts a lemon liqueur for Fellow Traveler's sweet-tart limoncello spritz and uses dry vermouth in his favorite variation, the Oso de Oro.

You can also dive into 20-plus amari, a family of herbal Italian digestifs. With alcohol contents as low as 16 percent, they work well as swaps for heavier spirits. "If you're with some real professionals shooting whiskey all night and you're doing amaro, you're going to be ahead of the curve," Phillips says. To stay out from under Fellow Traveler's tables, mix in shots of the house-made NA Malört—spiced with wormwood and ghost pepper to mimic the gut punch of the real thing—and the limone e sale, a blend of fresh lemon juice, soda, and salt that Phillips calls Sicilian Gatorade. *—RMM*

FORM MEETS FUNCTION

The latest offering from the owner of Hooch Booch hard kombucha? An electrolyte-packed NA drink.

In 2020, Anna Zesbaugh got into the beverage industry by taking a typically nonalcoholic product, kombucha, and using it to make booze-infused blends under the name Hooch Booch, now sold in Whole Foods. In August 2023, Zesbaugh launched the Blind Tiger Lounge in RiNo to serve as a taproom for Hooch Booch and a bar with other drink options. So, it might seem surprising that the latest endeavor in her Better Buzz Brands portfolio is decidedly *not* hard: a line of zero-proof, tea-based, canned functional beverages. However, Zesbaugh says it was demand for NA options at both Blind Tiger and markets where Hooch Booch had booths that inspired her to create Corpse Reviver, named after a classic hair-of-the-dog cocktail, in January 2024. "It hit me one day that I could do a corpse reviver that's *actually* a corpse reviver," Zesbaugh says. "It's good for you."

With three flavors—guava rose, botanical, and prickly pear—and packaging that's much sexier than, say, the outside of an Olipop or Powerade, Corpse Reviver has found a variety of audiences. Local bars are selling the gorgeous cans and mixing the bubbly liquid into mocktails and cocktails; fitness fanatics are packing Corpse Revivers to crack after hot yoga classes; and office-dwellers are replacing their afternoon coffees with the energy-boosting bevvies, which contain potassium, L-theanine, magnesium, zinc, and sodium. In fact, in its first year, Corpse Reviver did four times the sales of Hooch Booch. "It's the athleisure of the beverage world," Zesbaugh says. "You can go for your hot girl walk and have a Corpse Reviver after." ▲

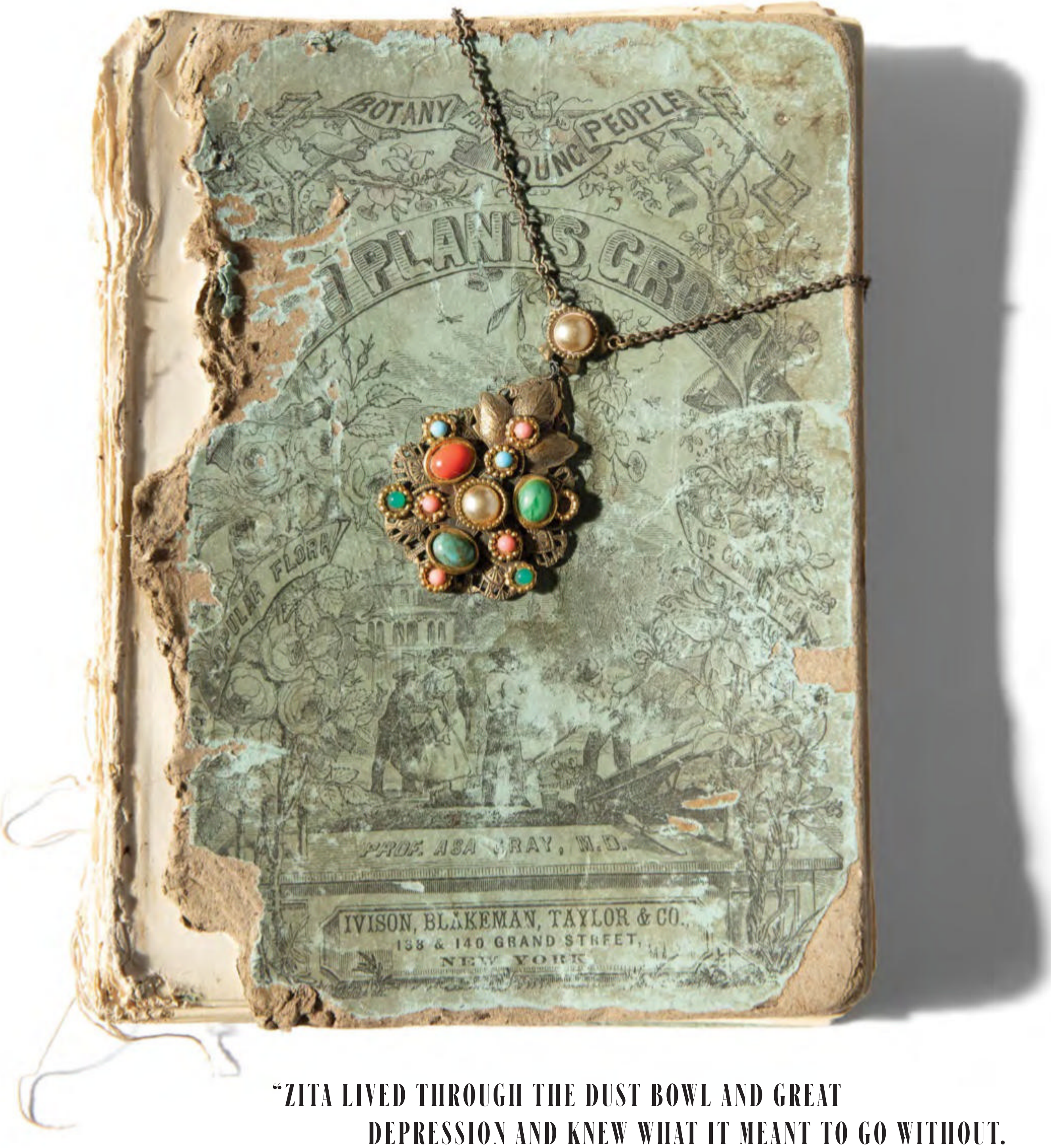
From left: A self-portrait of photographer and fourth-generation Colorado native Kaylinn Gilstrap with family photos in her parents' house on the ranch; her great-grandmother, Zita, in her youth; one of the many hats Zita wore; a perfume (or poison) ring in a cactus flower

THE THINGS WE LEAVE BEHIND

What a photographer learned about her great-grandmother's vibrant life on a rural Colorado ranch by documenting her most prized possessions—and what the experience taught the artist about herself.

WORDS BY JESSICA LARUSSO   PHOTOGRAPHY BY KAYLINN GILSTRAP

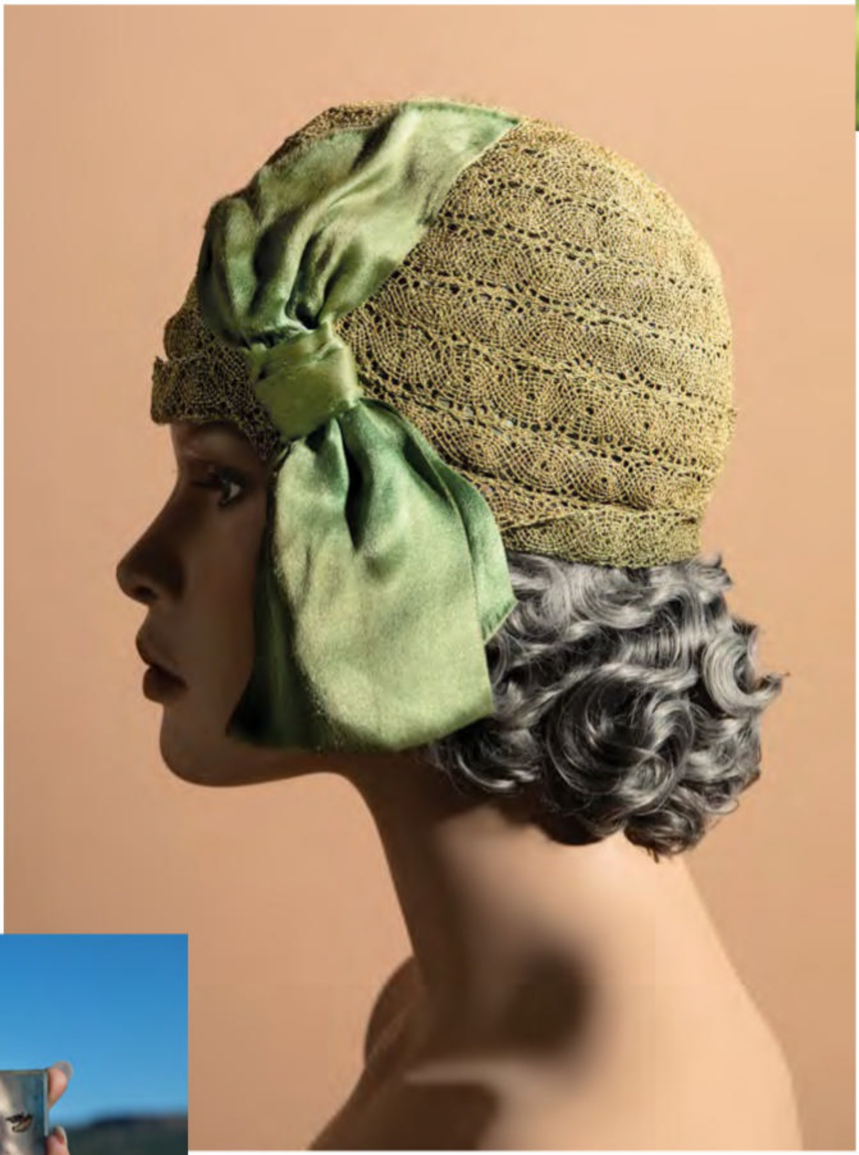
Growing up on her family's sprawling ranch an hour southeast of Trinidad, Kaylinn Gilstrap recalls that her great-grandfather, who moved to the homestead in the early 1900s, loomed large in family lore: Roy Louden was remembered for dipping his cowboy hat into murky ponds for a drink and popping his fake eye into his mouth to clean it. Relatives said less about his wife, Zita, who outlived Roy but died three months after Gilstrap was born in 1983. That Zita was overshadowed by her husband eventually began to weigh on her great-granddaughter. "Ninety-nine percent of the time, there is a woman behind these guys," Gilstrap says, "and she is just as powerful and interesting." A professional photographer, Gilstrap now lives in Atlanta and tries to return to the ranch for a month every year. But it wasn't until her brother called in 2019 to say he'd found "a bunch of hats" that she decided to document the possessions Zita collected during her 92 years, in the context of the wild, remote place the two women inhabited across time. The project led Gilstrap to new family stories about Zita, more still-unsolved mysteries, and, ultimately, a better understanding of how her ancestral roots in rural Colorado influence how she sees herself today. "We all have perceptions about how our environment shapes us, and some even make the mistake that small-town folks are limited in how big their experience is," Gilstrap says. "Zita was not going to be limited."



"ZITA LIVED THROUGH THE DUST BOWL AND GREAT DEPRESSION AND KNEW WHAT IT MEANT TO GO WITHOUT. SO WHEN SHE BOUGHT ITEMS, SHE CARED FOR THEM."

Zita grew up "well fixed" in Rocky Ford, as she wrote in a 1981 article in the *Frontier Times*, but her family struggled after a string of bad investments. So, in 1913, she left the city for a job teaching in a one-room, dirt-floor schoolhouse in the southeastern corner of the state that paid $50 a month. Her school bell is held by her namesake, Gilstrap's aunt. "We think our path is a straight line," Gilstrap says, "but that turn really shaped her life in ways she probably wasn't envisioning."

This 1920s cloche is one of 50-some hats Gilstrap's brother, who still works the ranch with her father, discovered in 2019. "Zita started making her presence known through objects," Gilstrap says, including accessories like a mouse pin and earrings, shown in varying degrees of polish. "She was just kind of pulling on my shirtsleeve." Zita, who claimed to have been named after a European empress, married Roy in 1916 and settled into the remote ranch house.



"I believe familial stories and heirlooms give us context to envision and try to understand a time past," Gilstrap, reflected here in one of Zita's mirrors, says. "For me, it only makes sense to look at personal history to gain perspective."

MRS.
E.O. LOUDEN
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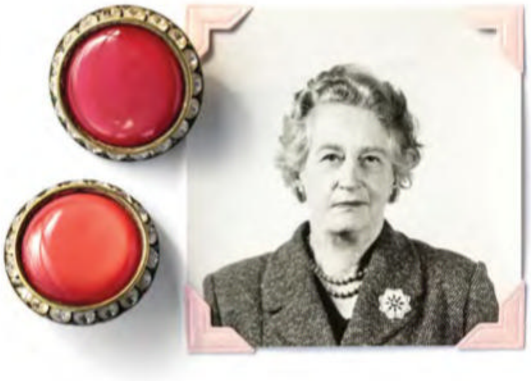
Although many people referred to the fashionable Zita as a city girl long after she'd moved to the ranch, she loved the rugged beauty of the arid plains. In the 1981 *Frontier Times* article, she wrote: "It was the most beautiful spring I have ever seen. The grass was soon knee high, wild flowers bloomed everywhere."

"It is my favorite place in the world, and it is the place I find the most frustrating," Gilstrap says of the ranch, whose headquarters are pictured, at right, around the time of Zita's arrival. "It's crazy beautiful and very peaceful, but it is also removed from resources and people." To combat the isolation, Zita traveled often, sometimes with Roy, sometimes with friends. The badge above is from a 1964 homemakers convention in Hawaii.

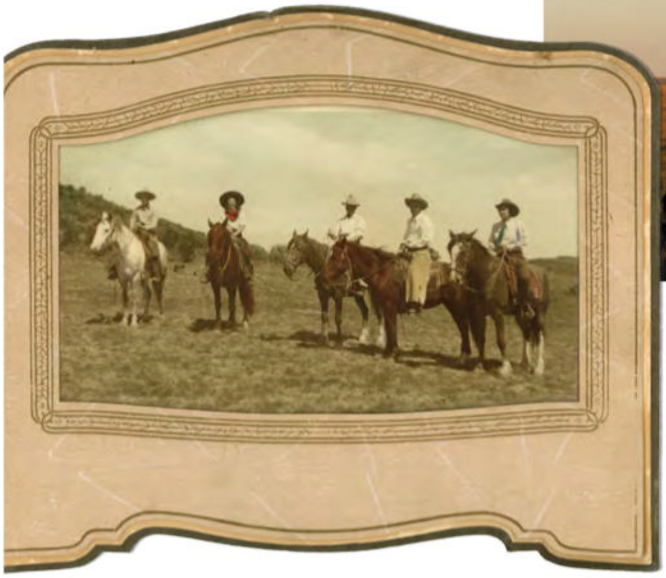
Among Zita's keepsakes was this dried leaf from Hawaii, which Gilstrap paired with a flower pin. Family members say Zita and Roy lived frugally—packing sandwiches rather than buying lunch on visits to Trinidad—preferring to save their money for bigger trips.

"I THINK ZITA SAW HERSELF AS A WOMAN OF THE WORLD."



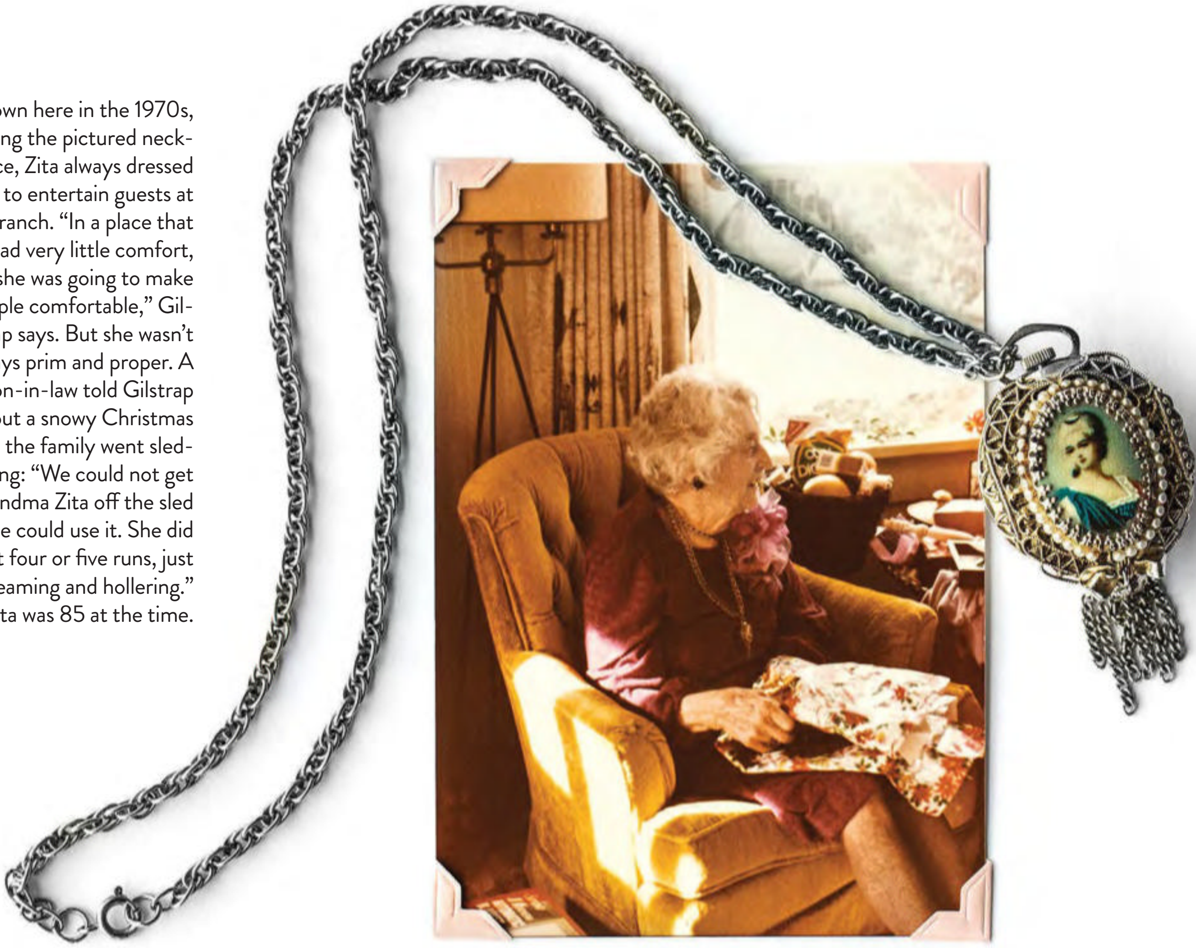
In an old passport, Gilstrap found stamps from Hungary, Russia, Czechoslovakia, Poland, England, Norway, Romania, and Costa Rica. Zita is pictured wearing these red earrings in a passport photo from later in life. One family member recalls her saying, "I've been all over the world, and there are still places on this ranch I haven't seen."

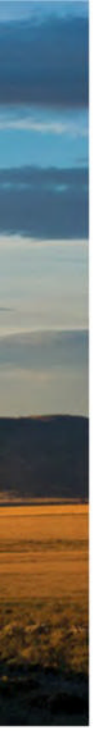
Zita (*below, far right*) was comfortable on horseback but a terror behind the wheel. "She would be getting ready while she drove," Gilstrap says, "changing hats, putting on shoes, putting on jewelry."



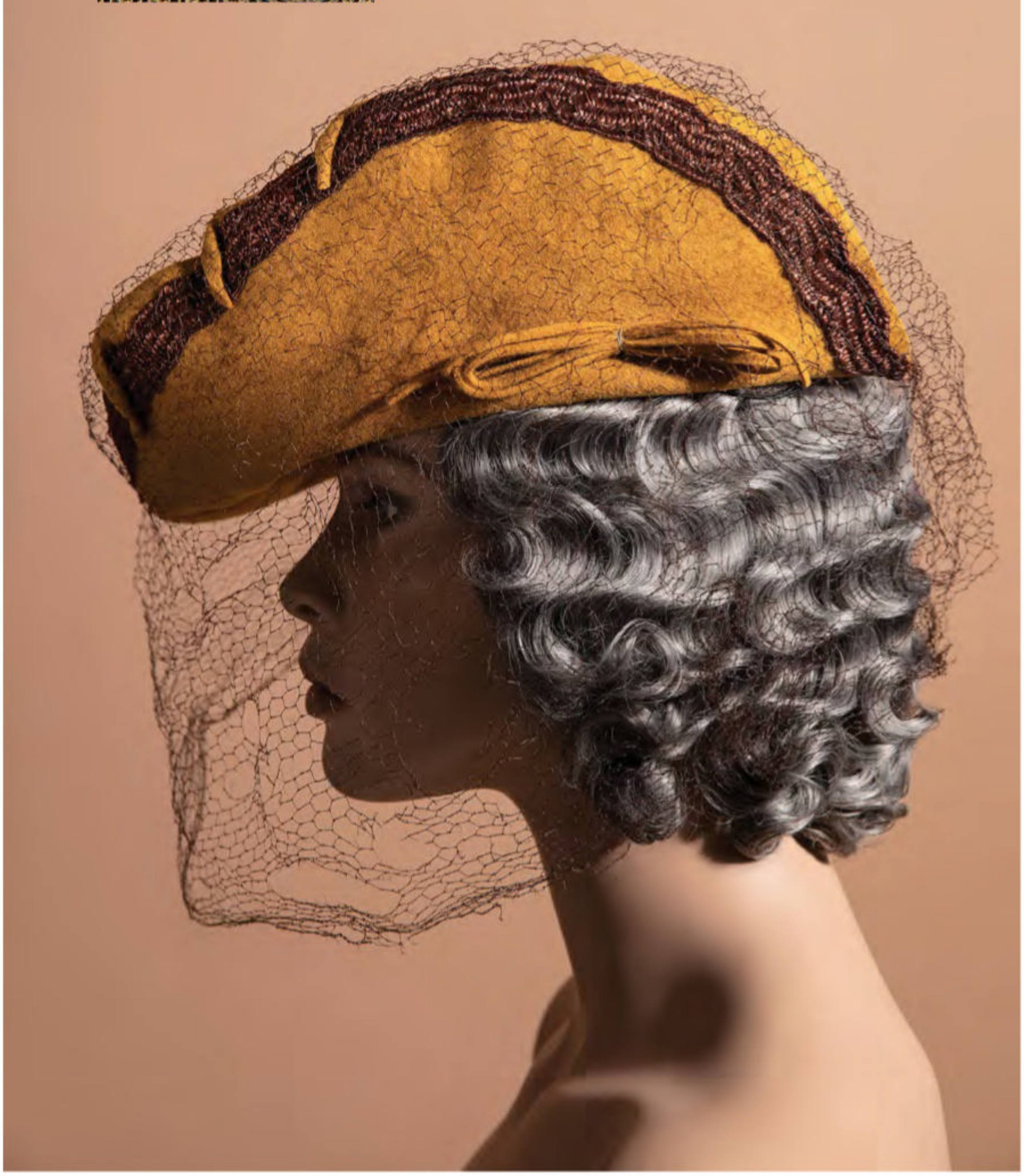
> "A FAMILY MEMBER SAID EVEN THE COWS ON THOSE COUNTRY ROADS KNEW HER CAR, AND THEY WOULD PART 'LIKE THE RED SEA' TO GET OFF THE ROAD FOR HER."

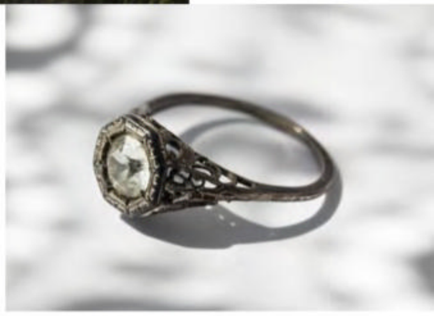
Shown here in the 1970s, wearing the pictured necklace, Zita always dressed up to entertain guests at the ranch. "In a place that had very little comfort, she was going to make people comfortable," Gilstrap says. But she wasn't always prim and proper. A grandson-in-law told Gilstrap about a snowy Christmas when the family went sledding: "We could not get Grandma Zita off the sled so we could use it. She did about four or five runs, just screaming and hollering." Zita was 85 at the time.





From brocade purses to quirky pins to modish hats, like this one from the 1940s, Zita collected souvenirs everywhere she went. “We all buy these little things on our journeys that help us remember places and people,” Gilstrap says. “Her big thing was fashion. And so, on her travels, she would buy things that she could wear, and then, I imagine, if she got complimented, she’d be like, *Oh, these things? I just got them when we were in Turkey*.” By photographing Zita’s mementos, Gilstrap hopes to creatively preserve her personal history in a way that outlasts the objects themselves.



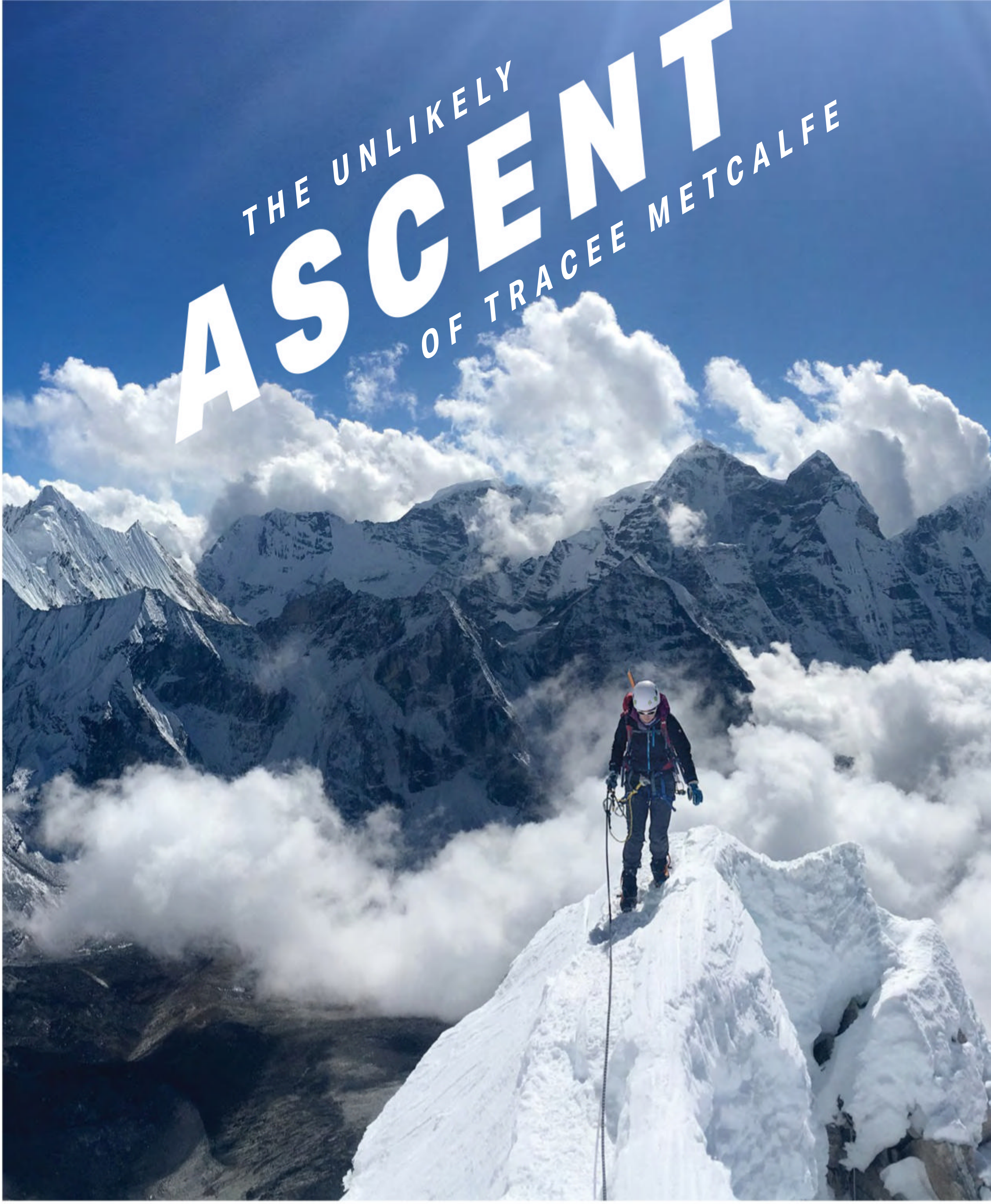


At the ranch, Zita (shown in her wedding dress, *far left*) spent her leisure time hosting and building a comfortable home, while Roy preferred to be out riding or hunting. “Whatever their differences, it worked; they carved out a life,” Gilstrap says. The intricacies of their 56-year marriage is among the many mysteries Gilstrap knows she may never fully unravel. Another? The location of Zita’s diamond ring, which she hid so well no one has been able to find it. (A ring of Zita’s, not *the* ring, is pictured.)

> “ONE OF ZITA’S GRANDSONS ASKED IF I FOUND THE DIAMOND RING THAT SHE HID AROUND THE HOUSE FOR SAFEKEEPING. LAST KNOWN HIDING SPOT WAS A FLOUR SACK. SHE’S BEEN DEAD 42 YEARS, AND THE RING IS STILL HIDDEN.”

Wearing one of Zita’s dresses—likely homemade, by her or a woman in the community—Gilstrap stands at the gate of her parents’ front yard on the ranch. Some parts of the landscape haven’t changed since Zita lived there. “We all carry around stories—some that we’re fully aware of, and then I think there are ancestral stories we are shaped by that we’re not even able to fully tap into,” Gilstrap says. “This project made me understand myself in a way I didn’t know I was seeking, just by starting to understand my roots.” ▲▲

THE UNLIKELY ASCENT OF TRACEE METCALFE



A fatal race thrust a Vail climber into a surprising position: the closest to becoming the first American woman to summit the 14 highest peaks in the world. But to claim the record, she'd have to face both the public's scrutiny and her personal demons.

BY DEVON O'NEIL

Metcalfe on Nepal's Ama Dablam

TRACEE METCALFE PLODDED THROUGH THE THIN AIR OF TIBET, TOWARD A DISTANT WHITE PINNACLE.

Shishapangma's summit was still a few hours away but in sight. Extending 26,335 feet into the sky, "Shish" is the shortest of the world's 14 tallest peaks, all of which top 8,000 meters, and features a technically manageable route to the apex, relative to other eight-thousanders. It also has a history of deadly avalanches.

It was October 7, 2023—a breezy but clear day in the Himalayas. Ahead of Metcalfe, a then 49-year-old internal medicine doctor from Vail, three Nepali guides fixed a rope in deep snow to provide the climbers more security as they negotiated a steep slope to the top. There was a lone woman in the trailbreaking group, and Metcalfe recognized her: Anna Gutu, 33, one of two mountaineers trying to become the first American woman to finish the eight-thousanders, a crowning feat in mountaineering. Her competition was 45-year-old Gina Rzucidlo, a friend of Metcalfe who was also on the mountain that day; Rzucidlo and Metcalfe had had tea together just days before. Both Rzucidlo and Gutu had completed 13 of the 14 peaks, with only Shish left on their lists.

By then, the third day of the climb, it was well known that Rzucidlo and Gutu were racing to the summit, alongside their respective Sherpas. Rzucidlo started behind Gutu that morning, but as the rope fixers approached the steeper pitch, Gutu saw her rival catching up and took off. Rzucidlo chased after. "You've got this," Metcalfe told Rzucidlo as she passed in the queue. "You're going so fast." Gutu and Rzucidlo quickly distanced themselves from Metcalfe's group, whose leaders stopped fixing the rope as the others scampered

Clockwise from top left: **Imagine Nepal climbers near the peak of Dhaulagiri; Tracee Metcalfe and Tamting Sherpa celebrate on Kangchenjunga; Metcalfe on Everest**

Previous spread: Kevin Kayl/Courtesy of Tracee Metcalfe.
This page: Senba Takayasu/Courtesy of Tracee Metcalfe

From left: Tracee Metcalfe; Pemba Tenzing Sherpa/Courtesy of Tracee Metcalfe

ahead. The lack of an anchored line meant the dueling Americans were attached only to their Sherpa guides as they approached the so-called "death zone" above 8,000 meters.

Not long after, Metcalfe spotted an avalanche rumbling down the slope to her left. She couldn't make out the fracture line above, but after the chunky debris stopped churning, she saw two climbers resting on top of it—later identified as Gutu and Mingmar Sherpa. *Oh, thank God*, she thought. *They're fine*. Then she realized they weren't moving. Metcalfe's physician mindset kicked in. She turned to her climbing partner, Tamting Sherpa, known as Mama, who was listening to radio chatter in Nepali. "Mama, should I go down there?" Metcalfe asked. "What's going on? Can I help?" She repeated those questions, getting the same answer each time: "No, you're just going to be in the way. They're dead."

Metcalfe looked at the others congregated at 25,100 feet, many of whom needed the summit for their personal checklists. Compact and strong—despite climbing on an artificial hip and a failing knee and using a steroid inhaler twice a day to manage her asthma—Metcalfe had topped nine eight-thousanders but never threatened Rzucidlo or Gutu for the record. (Rzucidlo had reassured her that "even third would be really good.") "I don't know what the rest of you are doing, but I'm done," Metcalfe said. "I'm going down."

Another climber scoffed: "What? You're a doctor. Don't you see death all the time? We can keep climbing."

"You're a fucking moron," Metcalfe snapped. Emotional trauma aside, she knew that continuing to climb on the same aspect and elevation where an avalanche had just occurred was potentially lethal.

Soon after Metcalfe and Mama started to retreat, Rzucidlo and two Sherpas—all of whom, according to a June 2024 story in *Outside*, saw the initial slide and continued to ascend—triggered a second avalanche. They, like Gutu's group, had cut across the precarious northeast face instead of sticking to the ridge. The debris thundered down to the right of the first avalanche's path, piling up 100 meters away from where Gutu lay.

Four people died in all—Gutu and Mingmar and Rzucidlo and Tenjen "Lama" Sherpa. Two avalanche victims survived. While bringing one of them down the mountain, Mingma Gyalje Sherpa—aka Mingma G, the owner of Imagine Nepal, the local outfitter Metcalfe had hired to guide her to the top—fell and fractured his skull. Rzucidlo's and Lama's bodies have not been found.

METCALFE DIDN'T HEAR about the second avalanche, the one that killed her friend, until about an hour later, when she was on her way back to Camp 3. The tragedy quickly made international headlines. It also drew condemnation from the climbing community: A pair of Western women had not only compromised their own safety in pursuit of a title, but two Sherpas had died supporting their duel. "That's what was so excruciating to me," says Ellen Miller, Metcalfe's mentor in Vail and the first American woman to climb Mt. Everest from the north (in 2001) and south (2002) sides. "Back in my day, we all just felt lucky to get up there and get down alive. Record-chasing has changed the energy on the mountain."

"If there was no competition," Mingma G says, "we all would have followed the fixed line."

Mountaineering has delivered both glory and tragedy for more than a century, most famously with the decades-long pursuit of the first ascent of Mt. Everest, ultimately claimed by Sir Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay in 1953. The inherent danger of such quests tempered the degree to which climbers challenged one another on the peaks—survival exacted a high enough cost on its own. The first major "race" that incited significant media coverage unfolded over a period of years, not months, when Italy's Reinhold Messner and Poland's Jerzy Kukuczka vied to be the first to climb every eight-thousander. Messner summited his initial eight-thousander in 1970 and took the title in 1986. (Guinness World Records later revoked his claim on a technicality, when it was discovered that Messner began his descent just shy of the true summit of Annapurna.)

The rise of commercial expeditions in the 1990s expanded the sport, but most paying clients headed to Everest, a summit that is less technical than other eight-thousanders but carries singular prestige. The peak became its own industry, injecting millions into Nepal's economy and opening the door to climbers with a modicum of the experience possessed by the self-sufficient old guard. The pressure on guides to put paying clients on top and the fame those customers sought gradually tainted the purity of the endeavor. In many cases, it also led to significant loss of life, such as in May 1996, when a storm killed eight guides and clients on Everest.

Still, demand continued to grow, eventually extending beyond Everest. Over the past decade, the logistical efficiency of commercial expeditions has expanded to other 8,000-meter peaks. Operators fixed ropes to the summits and realized they no longer needed to spend weeks acclimatizing. Nutritional supplements improved, clothing got warmer, and ice axes and crampons got lighter. The process was streamlined, and, not surprisingly, word spread. Social media influencers started showing up in base camps. Metcalfe says she saw commercial clients who didn't know how to put on their crampons.

The changes impacted the pursuit of records, too. Suddenly, any person with the means could finish the 14 in a fraction of the time it used to take legends. Gutu, for instance, summited her first eight-thousander only about a year before she tried for her last.

METCALFE GREW UP in Los Angeles. Her father worked as a chief financial officer for public companies; her mother was a homemaker. After graduating high school in 1992, Metcalfe spent a year ski-bumming in Breckenridge, where she delivered pizza and cleaned houses while competing in mogul events.

She bagged her first fourteeners—Lincoln, Bross, and Democrat in Park County—in 1993. She added to her list casually, through undergrad at Colorado College, while working as a cancer researcher in Denver, and during medical school at the University of Colorado. After the easy peaks, she pursued more technical ones, despite a crippling fear of heights. "It was mostly about proving to myself that I could do something hard and uncomfortable," she says. Soon, she was shimmying along the Knife Edge on Capitol and clambering up Pyramid's airy ledges. Before climbs, Metcalfe would swallow a quarter-tablet of Ativan, a benzodiazepine that works like a sedative, to manage her acrophobia; later, she tried eye movement desensitization and reprocessing (EMDR), a form of psychotherapy that helps process trauma. "I used to think my fear was horrible, and I was ashamed when I had it," Metcalfe says. "EMDR taught me to make friends with it. If you need to, talk to it. Say, 'Hey, I appreciate that you're trying to help me, but right now you're not helping me. So I'm gonna put you in this box'"—a fictional compartment in her mind, where it stayed until the climb was over.

In 2012, Metcalfe summited Denali, North America's highest peak, while volunteering as an expedition doctor for the National Park Service. She returned to Alaska in 2013, the same summer she finished climbing Colorado's

This spread, from left: Anni Pentilla/Courtesy of Tracee Metcalfe; Dawa Gyalje Sherpa/Courtesy of Tracee Metcalfe; Sarah Banks

METCALFE'S RECORD-BREAKING SUMMITS

5.13.16 EVERECT
9.25.18 CHO OYU
5.15.19 MAKALU
4.16.21 ANNAPURNA
4.13.22 DHAULAGIRI
5.7.22 KANGCHENJUNGA

From left: **Mingma Gyalje Sherpa and Metcalfe on Manaslu in 2023; the Imagine Nepal team atop Shishapangma in 2024; Metcalfe hiking in Vail this past fall**

fourteeners (excepting Culebra, which is on private property). Soon after, she told her father, "I need bigger mountains." Miller, her mentor, introduced her to famed Everest guide Russell Brice, who offered Metcalfe a job as a base-camp physician in Nepal starting in 2014. The unique arrangement—she often climbed for free instead of taking a wage—gained her entry into Himalayan mountaineering.

While working as an expedition doc in May 2016, Metcalfe summited Everest, running out of oxygen during the descent and surviving a stumble that left her dangling over air from the fixed line. She improved her technical climbing skills, and in 2019—no longer doubling as the base-camp physician—she took her second shot at 27,838-foot Makalu, a significantly steeper challenge than Everest. Before leaving for Nepal, Metcalfe wrote her parents a letter, imploring them not to recover her body if something happened.

Metcalfe was aware that no American woman had climbed the eight-thousanders. After summiting Makalu, she decided she would try to top the eight in Nepal. After that, all 14. "Being first wasn't the goal," she says. "This is horrible self-talk that I work on, but I kept thinking somebody who's a 'real' climber would come along. I didn't want to fight for it. I just wanted to finish the project."

PURSUIT OF THE eight-thousanders had killed many a standout mountaineer, history that Metcalfe came to know well. She read about women like Wanda Rutkiewicz, a Pole who was the first woman to climb K2. Rutkiewicz led her own expeditions and knocked off eight 8,000-meter peaks in 14 years before disappearing on Kangchenjunga in 1992, at age 49. Metcalfe reserved special admiration for Spain's Edurne Pasaban and Austria's Gerlinde Kaltenbrunner, who climbed in a style similar to Rutkiewicz's—without supplemental oxygen or guides—and were the first women to complete the eight-thousanders, in 2010 and 2011, respectively. "I look up to them as goddesses," Metcalfe says.

Metcalfe is quick to acknowledge that her style does not compare with theirs: She pays outfitters to keep her safe and transport her gear up and down the mountain, and she uses oxygen—factors that significantly ease the burden. But they don't eliminate it. In April 2021, while descending 26,545-foot Annapurna, Metcalfe and her team ran out of oxygen in the death zone. She struggled to complete basic tasks, like clipping onto a rope. After a couple of hours, she swallowed a pill of dexamethasone, a steroid many physicians consider the last resort during hypoxia. Some Spanish-speaking guides call it levanta muertos, because it brings a dead person to life. Her outfitter eventually purchased an extra bottle of oxygen

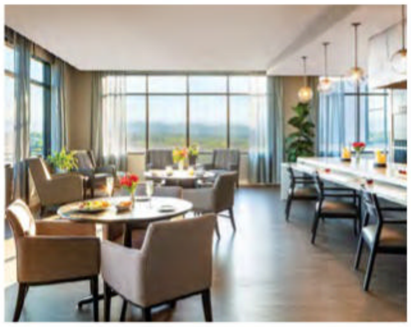
CONTINUED ON PAGE 76

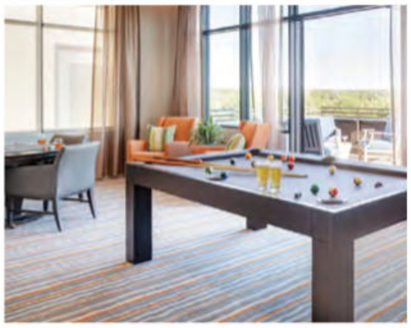
7.2.23	NANGA PARBAT
7.28.23	K2
9.21.23	MANASLU
5.20.24	LHOTSE
7.22.24	G2
8.2.24	G1
8.8.24	BROAD PEAK
10.4.24	SHISHAPANGMA

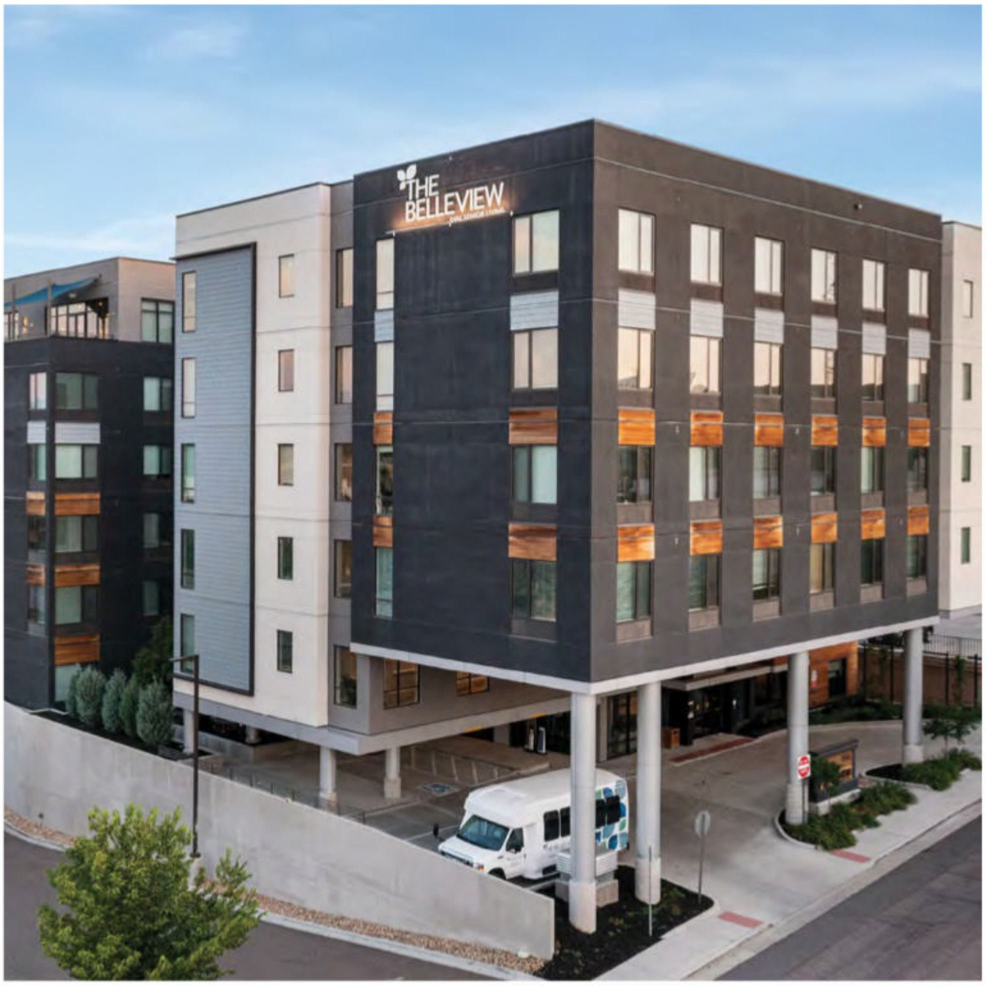
TOP SENIOR LIVING COMMUNITIES 2025

SPECIAL ADVERTISING SECTION

Explore our annual, comprehensive list of Colorado's premier senior living communities, assisted living facilities, and in-home care organizations. To compile the list, *5280* partnered with Data Joe, a national quantitative research firm that conducted local research and verified every listing.







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Read more on pg. 67

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Thornton, CO 80241

BROOKDALE: GREENWOOD VILLAGE
6450 S. Boston St.
Greenwood Village, CO 80111

BROOKDALE: LITTLETON
8271 S. Continental
Divide Road
Littleton, CO 80127

BROOKDALE MERIDIAN: ARVADA
9555 W. 59th Ave.
Arvada, CO 80004

BROOKDALE MERIDIAN: BOULDER
801 Gillaspie Drive
Boulder, CO 80305

BROOKDALE MERIDIAN: ENGLEWOOD
3455 S. Corona St.
Englewood, CO 80113

BROOKDALE MERIDIAN: LAKEWOOD
1805 S. Balsam St.
Lakewood, CO 80232

BROOKDALE MERIDIAN: WESTLAND
10695 W. 17th Ave.
Lakewood, CO 80215

BROOKDALE NORTH: BOULDER
3350 30th St.
Boulder, CO 80301

BROOKDALE: PARKPLACE
111 Emerson St.
Denver, CO 80218

BROOKDALE: TAMARAC SQUARE
8030 E. Girard Ave.
Denver, CO 80231

BROOKDALE: UNIVERSITY PARK COLORADO
2020 S. Monroe St.
Denver, CO 80210

CARILLON AT BELLEVIEW STATION
4855 S. Niagara St.
Denver, CO 80237

CENTENNIAL CROSSINGS
15475 E. Fair Place
Centennial, CO 80016

CHERRY CREEK RETIREMENT VILLAGE
14555 E. Hampden Ave.
Aurora, CO 80014

CLEAR CREEK COMMONS
1027 Washington Ave.
Golden, CO 80401

CLERMONT PARK
2479 S. Clermont St.
Denver, CO 80222

CONCORDIA ON THE LAKE
6155 S. Ammons Way
Suite 110
Littleton, CO 80123

EASTERN STAR MASONIC RETIREMENT CAMPUS
2445 S. Quebec St.
Denver, CO 80231

EVERLEIGH CENTRAL PARK
2980 Syracuse St.
Denver, CO 80238

FIVE STAR RESIDENCES OF DAYTON PLACE
1950 S. Dayton St.
Aurora, CO 80247

FLATIRONS TERRACE RETIREMENT COMMUNITY
930 28th St.
Boulder, CO 80303

FRASIER RETIREMENT COMMUNITY
350 Ponca Place
Boulder, CO 80303

FRONTIER VALLEY INDEPENDENT AND ASSISTED LIVING
11265 E. Mississippi Ave.
Aurora, CO 80012

GARDEN PLAZA OF AURORA
14221 E. Evans Ave.
Aurora, CO 80014

GOLDEN POND RETIREMENT COMMUNITY
1270 N. Ford St.
Golden, CO 80403

GOOD SAMARITAN SOCIETY: FORT COLLINS VILLAGE
508 W. Trilby Road
Fort Collins, CO 80525

GOOD SAMARITAN SOCIETY: FOX RUN
1720 60th Ave.
Greeley, CO 80634

GOOD SAMARITAN SOCIETY: WATER VALLEY SENIOR LIVING RESORT
805 Compassion Drive
Windsor, CO 80550

GRACE POINTE SENIOR CARE COMMUNITY
1919 68th Ave.
Greeley, CO 80634

GREELEY PLACE
1051 6th St.
Greeley, CO 80631

HEATHER GARDENS
2888 S. Heather Gardens Way
Aurora, CO 80014

HIGHLAND TRAIL
5085 W. 136th Ave.
Broomfield, CO 80023

HILLCREST OF LOVELAND
535 N. Douglas Ave.
Loveland, CO 80537

HILLTOP RESERVE SENIOR LIVING
525 S. Holly St.
Denver, CO 80246

HOLIDAY SUGAR VALLEY ESTATES
4320 Georgetown Drive
Loveland, CO 80538

HOLLY CREEK RETIREMENT COMMUNITY
5500 E. Peakview Ave.
Centennial, CO 80121

HYLAND HILLS SENIOR LIVING
9560 Sheridan Blvd.
Westminster, CO 80031

INGLENOOK AT BRIGHTON RETIREMENT COMMUNITY
2195 E. Egbert St.
Brighton, CO 80601

KEYSTONE PLACE AT LEGACY RIDGE
11180 Irving Drive
Westminster, CO 80031

KIPLING MEADOWS SENIOR LIVING
7175 Kipling St.
Arvada, CO 80004
Read more below

LAKEVIEW SENIOR LIVING
7390 W. Eastman Place
Lakewood, CO 80227

LAKEWOOD ESTATES
8585 W. Dakota Ave.
Lakewood, CO 80226

LINCOLN MEADOWS SENIOR LIVING
10001 S. Oswego St.
Parker, CO 80134

KIPLING MEADOWS SENIOR LIVING

Kipling Meadows Independent Living is a luxury oasis nestled in a quiet, tree-lined neighborhood in the heart of Arvada, Colorado. The community features cozy common areas complete with comfortable furnishings and a stone fireplace. Culinary enthusiasts will enjoy three chef-prepared dining experiences daily and also have an opportunity to visit with loved ones at the community's bistro. Residents who enjoy physical activity can take advantage of the fitness area, and those with competitive spirits will find joy in the game room, featuring billiards. Kipling Meadows also offers a charming patio area, surrounded by raised garden beds blooming with vibrant flowers and nearby, regional parks, lakes, nature trails, and golf courses provide additional outdoor options. The community's ever-evolving calendar is filled with engaging activities, entertainment choices, and group outings, ensuring that residents always have something to anticipate. **Schedule your tour today and experience retirement reimagined.**

SERVICES + AMENITIES: On-demand nursing and on-site therapy • Chef-prepared dining with three daily meals • Weekly housekeeping • Fitness area • Bistro area • Private dining room • Game room with billiards

KIPLING MEADOWS

7175 Kipling St., Arvada, CO 80004
(720) 310-6179 | **KIPLINGMEADOWS.COM**

MACKENZIE PLACE: FORT COLLINS
4750 Pleasant Oak Drive
Fort Collins, CO 80525

MIRASOL SENIOR LIVING COMMUNITY
1153 Finch St.
Loveland, CO 80537

MODENA CHERRY CREEK
2440 S. Wabash St.
Denver, CO 80231

MORNINGSTAR AT HOLLY PARK
6675 S. Holly St.
Centennial, CO 80121

MORNINGSTAR OF ARVADA
17351 W. 64th Ave.
Arvada, CO 80007

MORNINGSTAR OF PARKER
18900 E. Mainstreet
Parker, CO 80134

OVERTURE CENTRAL PARK
8133 E. 29th Place
Denver, CO 80238

PARKSIDE VILLAGE RETIREMENT RESORT
14501 E. Crestline Drive
Aurora, CO 80015

PARKWOOD ESTATES
2201 S. Lemay Ave.
Fort Collins, CO 80525

PINE GROVE CROSSING
19160 Cottonwood Drive
Parker, CO 80138

QUINCY PLACE
7200 E. Quincy Ave.
Denver, CO 80237

RIGDEN FARM SENIOR LIVING
2350 Limon Drive
Fort Collins, CO 80525

RIVERPOINTE OF LITTLETON
5225 S. Prince St.
Littleton, CO 80123

SAN MARINO RETIREMENT COMMUNITY
5000 W. 75th Ave.
Westminster, CO 80030

SKY POINTE RETIREMENT RESORT
5842 S. Taft St.
Littleton, CO 80127

SOLANA LAKEWOOD
11001 W. 15th Place
Lakewood, CO 80215

SOMEREN GLEN CONTINUING CARE COMMUNITY
5000 E. Arapahoe Road
Centennial, CO 80122

SPRINGBROOKE SENIOR LIVING
6800 Leetsdale Drive
Denver, CO 80224

ST. ANDREW'S VILLAGE
13801 E. Yale Ave.
Aurora, CO 80014

SUNRISE AT FLATIRONS
400 Summit Blvd.
Broomfield, CO 80021

THE ARGYLE
4115 W. 38th Ave.
Denver, CO 80212

THE AVENUES CROFTON PARK
12431 King Court
Broomfield, CO 80020

THE BELLEVIEW SENIOR LIVING
3555 S. Clarkson St.
Englewood, CO 80113
Read more on pg. 63

THE COURTYARD AT LAKEWOOD
7100 W. 13th Ave.
Lakewood, CO 80215

THE COURTYARDS AT MOUNTAIN VIEW
8101 E. Mississippi Ave.
Denver, CO 80247

THE GALLERY AT BROOMFIELD
1450 W. 169th Ave.
Broomfield, CO 80023

THE GARDENS AT ST. ELIZABETH
2835 W. 32nd Ave.
Denver, CO 80211

THE GARDENS ON QUAIL
6447 Quail St.
Arvada, CO 80004

THE LODGE AT GREELEY
4430 24th St. Road
Greeley, CO 80634

THE PEAKS CARE CENTER
1440 Coffman St.
Longmont, CO 80501

THE PEARL AT BOULDER CREEK
2525 Taft Drive
Boulder, CO 80302

THE RIDGE PINEHURST
7205 W. Quincy Ave.
Lakewood, CO 80235

THE VILLAS AT SUNNY ACRES
2501 E. 104th Ave.
Thornton, CO 80233

THE WINDERMERE
5820 S. Windermere St.
Littleton, CO 80120

TRADITIONS AT ENGLEWOOD
3500 S. Sherman St.
Englewood, CO 80113

V-ESPRIT ACTIVE ADULT COMMUNITY
5240 S. Shalom Park Circle
Aurora, CO 80015

VI AT HIGHLANDS RANCH
2850 Classic Drive
Highlands Ranch, CO 80126

VILLAGE AT BELMAR
7825 W. Alameda Ave.
Lakewood, CO 80226

WIND CREST SENIOR LIVING
3235 Mill Vista Road
Highlands Ranch, CO 80129

WINDSOR GARDENS
595 S. Clinton St.
Denver, CO 80247

ASSISTED LIVING

BALFOUR AT CENTRAL PARK
2979 Uinta St.
Denver, CO 80238

BALFOUR AT LITTLETON
8160 W. Coal Mine Ave.
Littleton, CO 80123

BALFOUR AT RIVERFRONT PARK
1500 Little Raven St.
Denver, CO 80202

BETHESDA GARDENS LOVELAND
1875 Fall River Drive
Loveland, CO 80538

BETHESDA GARDENS THORNTON
12610 Hudson St.
Thornton, CO 80241

BROOKDALE LOWRY
150 Quebec St.
Denver, CO 80230

CALEY RIDGE ASSISTED LIVING COMMUNITY
9350 E. Caley Ave.
Englewood, CO 80111

CARILLON AT BELLEVIEW STATION
4855 S. Niagara St.
Denver, CO 80237

CHERRY CREEK RETIREMENT VILLAGE
14555 E. Hampden Ave.
Aurora, CO 80014

CLERMONT PARK ASSISTED LIVING
2479 S. Clermont St.
Denver, CO 80222

COGIR CADENCE BROOMFIELD
4275 W. 121st Ave.
Broomfield, CO 80020

COLLINWOOD ASSISTED LIVING AND MEMORY CARE
5055 S. Lemay Ave.
Fort Collins, CO 80525

FIVE STAR RESIDENCES OF DAYTON PLACE
1950 S. Dayton St.
Denver, CO 80247

FRASIER RETIREMENT COMMUNITY
350 Ponca Place
Boulder, CO 80303

GARDEN PLAZA OF AURORA
14221 E. Evans Ave.
Aurora, CO 80014

GARDEN SQUARE AT WESTLAKE
3151 W. 20th St.
Greeley, CO 80634

GARDENS CARE SENIOR LIVING: MEADOW HILLS
3828 S. Eagle St.
Aurora, CO 80014

GOOD SAMARITAN SOCIETY FORT COLLINS VILLAGE
508 W. Trilby Road
Fort Collins, CO 80525

GRACE POINTE SENIOR CARE COMMUNITY
1919 68th Ave.
Greeley, CO 80634

HILLCREST OF LOVELAND
535 N. Douglas Ave.
Loveland, CO 80537

HILLTOP RESERVE
525 S. Holly St.
Denver, CO 80246

HOLLY CREEK RETIREMENT COMMUNITY
5500 E. Peakview Ave.
Centennial, CO 80121

HYLAND HILLS SENIOR LIVING
9560 Sheridan Blvd.
Westminster, CO 80031

INGLENOOK AT BRIGHTON
2195 E. Egbert St.
Brighton, CO 80601

KEYSTONE PLACE AT LEGACY RIDGE
11180 Irving Drive
Westminster, CO 80031

MARY CREST ASSISTED LIVING
2850 Columbine Road
Denver, CO 80221

MONTAGE HILLS
2500 S. Roslyn St.
Denver, CO 80231

MONTAGE RIDGE
12791 W. Alameda Parkway
Lakewood, CO 80228

MORNINGSTAR AT APPLEWOOD
2800 Youngfield St.
Lakewood, CO 80215

MORNINGSTAR AT HOLLY PARK
6675 S. Holly St.
Centennial, CO 80121

MORNINGSTAR AT JORDAN
14301 E. Arapahoe Road
Centennial, CO 80112

ACOYA CHERRY CREEK

Acoya Cherry Creek is both a haven and a hub where you can relax and create. Offering independent living and assisted living in Denver, we provide abundant lifestyle amenities, spacious residences, and concierge services to help you enjoy retired life as it was intended. Find everything you need and more at this exclusive senior living community.

ACOYA
CHERRY CREEK
by cogir

301 S. Harrison St., Denver, CO 80209
(970) 660-6271 | **ACOYACHERRYCREEK.COM**

MORNINGSTAR OF ARVADA
17351 W. 64th Ave.
Arvada, CO 80007

MORNINGSTAR OF FORT COLLINS
3509 Lochwood Drive
Fort Collins, CO 80525

MORNINGSTAR OF LITTLETON
5344 S. Kipling Parkway
Littleton, CO 80127

ROCKY MOUNTAIN ASSISTED LIVING: CENTENNIAL
3638 E. Euclid Ave.
Centennial, CO 80121

ROCKY MOUNTAIN ASSISTED LIVING: LAKEWOOD
9000 W. Virginia Ave.
Lakewood, CO 80226

ROCKY MOUNTAIN ASSISTED LIVING: THORNTON
3301 E. 120th Ave.
Thornton, CO 80233

ROSEMARK AT MAYFAIR PARK
833 Jersey St.
Denver, CO 80220

SAN MARINO RETIREMENT COMMUNITY
5000 W. 75th Ave.
Westminster, CO 80030

SOMEREN GLEN CONTINUING CARE COMMUNITY
5000 E. Arapahoe Road
Centennial, CO 80122

ST. ANDREW'S VILLAGE
13801 E. Yale Ave.
Aurora, CO 80014

STONECREEK OF LITTLETON
7800 S. Windermere St.
Littleton, CO 80120

SUNRISE AT CHERRY CREEK
251 S. Colorado Blvd.
Denver, CO 80246

SUNRISE AT FLATIRONS
400 Summit Blvd.
Broomfield, CO 80021

SUNRISE AT ORCHARD
5975 S. Holly St.
Littleton, CO 80121

SUNRISE OF BOULDER
3955 28th St.
Boulder, CO 80304

SUNRISE OF WESTMINSTER
10280 N. Sheridan Blvd.
Westminster, CO 80020

THE APARTMENTS AT CINNAMON PARK
1333 Cinnamon St.
Longmont, CO 80501

THE ARGYLE
4115 W. 38th Ave.
Denver, CO 80212

THE BELLEVIEW SENIOR LIVING
3555 S. Clarkson St.
Englewood, CO 80113
Read more on pg. 63

THE BRIDGE AT GREELEY
4750 W. 25th St.
Greeley, CO 80634

THE BRIDGE AT LONGMONT
2444 Pratt St.
Longmont, CO 80501

THE CAPSTONE AT CENTERRA
4295 McWhinney Blvd.
Loveland, CO 80538

THE COURTYARDS AT MOUNTAIN VIEW
8101 E. Mississippi Ave.
Denver, CO 80247

THE GALLERY AT BROOMFIELD
1450 W. 169th Ave.
Broomfield, CO 80023

THE GARDENS AT COLUMBINE
5130 W. Ken Caryl Ave.
Littleton, CO 80128

THE GARDENS AT ST. ELIZABETH
2835 W. 32nd Ave.
Denver, CO 80211

THE HAVEN HOME
1368 Finn Ave.
Lone Tree, CO 80124

THE INN AT GREENWOOD VILLAGE
5565 S. Yosemite St.
Greenwood Village, CO 80111

THE LODGE AT GREELEY
4430 24th St. Road
Greeley, CO 80634

THE MANOR ON MARSTON LAKE
4800 Old S. Wadsworth Blvd.
Littleton, CO 80123

THE OBERON HOUSE ASSISTED LIVING COMMUNITY
9160 W. 64th Ave.
Arvada, CO 80004

THE PEAKS AT OLD LARAMIE TRAIL
660 Old Laramie Trail
Lafayette, CO 80026

THE PEAKS CARE CENTER
1440 Coffman St.
Longmont, CO 80501

THE PEARL AT BOULDER CREEK
2525 Taft Drive
Boulder, CO 80302

THE RETREAT AT CHURCH RANCH
10190 Wadsworth Blvd.
Westminster, CO 80021

VILLAGE AT BELMAR
7825 W. Alameda Ave.
Lakewood, CO 80226

HOSPICE

A PEACEFUL JOURNEY HOSPICE
2851 S. Parker Road
Suite 1130
Aurora, CO 80014

ABODE HOSPICE & HOME HEALTH
445 Union Blvd., Suite 223
Lakewood, CO 80228

ACCENTCARE HOSPICE & PALLIATIVE CARE
455 Sherman St., Suite 465 A
Denver, CO 80203

DataJoe created and implemented a research campaign to identify the top retirement facilities and providers in the area. We consulted various public sources, including state and federal government sources, to collect our initial information. As applicable, we eliminated facilities that did not meet our minimum capacity threshold to increase the likelihood that the winner set would have openings for readers interested in contacting these facilities (reader relevance). We then factored in federal government ratings (where applicable) and frequency of negative reports to the state regulatory agency (complaints, disciplinary actions, enforcement actions, as available to the public) to isolate the top candidates for our list. Finally, we also conducted internet research to check various local media outlets to confirm a positive community perception, as well as factored in online ratings. We were looking for facilities meeting our minimum thresholds with the highest ratings and smallest proportion of negative reports/press.

ADVENTHEALTH PORTER
2525 S. Downing St.
Denver, CO 80210

ALL SEASONS HOSPICE
801 W. Mineral Ave.
Littleton, CO 80120

ALLIANT PALLIATIVE CARE AND HOSPICE
12225 Pecos St.
Suite 100/200
Westminster, CO 80234

BANNER HEALTH CLINIC: PALLIATIVE CARE
1801 16th St.
Suite 210
Greeley, CO 80631

BERKLEY PALLIATIVE CARE AND HOSPICE
10697 E. Dartmouth Ave.
Aurora, CO 80014

BRIGHTON HOSPICE COLORADO
8055 E. Tufts Ave.
Suite 700
Denver, CO 80237

BRISTOL HOSPICE DENVER
5950 S. Willow Drive
Greenwood Village, CO 80111

CANYON HOME CARE & HOSPICE: LOVELAND
4850 Hahns Peak Drive
Suite 100
Loveland, CO 80538

CHOICE HOSPICE
6041 S. Syracuse Way
Suite 100
Greenwood Village, CO 80111

COLORADO PALLIATIVE & HOSPICE CARE: FRONT RANGE
6551 S. Revere Parkway
Suite 130
Centennial, CO 80111

COLORADO VISITING NURSE ASSOCIATION
6750 W. 52nd Ave.
Arvada, CO 80002

COMPASSUS: DENVER HOSPICE
2420 W. 26th Ave.
Suite 200D
Denver, CO 80211

COMPLETECO HOSPICE CARE
3033 S. Parker Road
Suite 506
Aurora, CO 80014

CRAFT HEALTH
1650 38th St.
Suite 101E
Boulder, CO 80301

DIGNITY HOSPICE OF COLORADO
400 E. 84th Ave.
Suite W202
Thornton, CO 80229

ELEVATION HOSPICE OF COLORADO
7850 Vance Drive
Arvada, CO 80003

EMMAUS CATHOLIC HOSPICE
5290 E. Yale Cir.
Suite 100
Denver, CO 80222

ENHABIT HOSPICE
6021 S. Syracuse Way
Suite 204
Greenwood Village, CO 80111

ENVISION HEALTHCARE AT HOME COLORADO
1720 S. Bellaire St.
Suite 308
Denver, CO 80222

FULL HEARTS HOSPICE
13780 E. Rice Place
Suite 115
Aurora, CO 80015

GATEWAY HOME HEALTH AND HOSPICE
2696 S. Colorado Blvd.
Suite 570
Denver, CO 80222

GENTIVA HOSPICE
425 S. Cherry St.
Denver, CO 80246

HEALTHONE HOSPICE & FAMILY CARE
5600 S. Quebec St.
Suite 375C
Greenwood Village, CO 80111

INTERMOUNTAIN HEALTH HOSPICE: DENVER
3210 Lutheran Parkway
Wheat Ridge, CO 80033

LEGACY HOSPICE
599 Topeka Way
Castle Rock, CO 80109

MISSION HOME HEALTH AND PALLIATIVE CARE
12835 E. Arapahoe Road,
Tower I Suite 400
Centennial, CO 80112

NAMASTE HOSPICE
5161 E. Arapahoe Road
Suite 320
Centennial, CO 80122

OPTIMAL HOSPICE CARE
4380 S. Syracuse St.
Suite 455
Denver, CO 80237

OVATION HOSPICE OF DENVER
4600 S. Syracuse St.
Suite 985
Denver, CO 80237

PATHWAYS HOSPICE CARE: FORT COLLINS
305 Carpenter Road
Fort Collins, CO 80525

SILVER LININGS HOSPICE
6450 S. Quebec St.
Building 5, Suite 650
Centennial, CO 80111

SUNCREST HOSPICE
1605 Foxtrail Drive
Suite 200
Loveland, CO 80538

THE DENVER HOSPICE INPATIENT CARE CENTER
8299 E. Lowry Blvd.
Denver, CO 80230

TRAIL WINDS HOSPICE
75 Manhattan Drive
Suite 1
Boulder, CO 80303

TRU HOSPICE CARE CENTER
1950 Mountain View Ave.
4th Floor South
Longmont, CO 80026

UCHEALTH PALLIATIVE CARE: ANSCHUTZ CANCER PAVILION
1665 Aurora Court
Anschutz Cancer Pavilion
Aurora, CO 80045

We recognize that many facilities/providers may not be shown in this representative list. This is a sampling of the huge array of service providers within the region. Inclusion in the list is based on information that we were able to gather in our independent research. We take time and energy to ensure a fair, multifaceted research process. We certainly do not discount the fact that many, many good and effective providers and facilities may not appear on the list.

DataJoe uses best practices and exercises great care in assembling content for this list. DataJoe does not warrant that the data contained within the list are complete or accurate. DataJoe does not assume, and hereby disclaims, any liability to any person for any loss or damage caused by errors or omissions herein whether such errors or omissions result from negligence, accident, or any other cause. All rights reserved. No commercial use of the information in this list may be made without written permission from DataJoe.

Dining Guide

PRICE KEY
Average Entrée

$	under $15
$$	$16 to $20
$$$	$21 to $30
$$$$	$31 and higher

SYMBOL KEY

● Indicates a restaurant featured in *5280* for the first time (though not necessarily a restaurant that has just opened).

★ Indicates inclusion in *5280*'s 2024 list of Denver's best restaurants. These selections are at the discretion of *5280* editors and are subject to change.

ACE EAT SERVE $$$
Uptown / Asian This Uptown restaurant and ping-pong hall features Asian-inspired cuisine and 10 ping-pong tables. Try the Sichuan shrimp wontons. Reservations accepted. *501 E. 17th Ave., 303-800-7705. Dinner, Brunch*

AFRICAN GRILL & BAR $$
Lakewood / African Explore a bevy of dishes from across Africa at this warm and inviting restaurant. Peanut soups, samosas, and jollof rice are just some of the crave-worthy options available here. Reservations accepted. *955 S. Kipling Parkway, Lakewood, 303-985-4497. Lunch, Dinner*

★**ALMA FONDA FINA** $$$$
LoHi / Mexican This contemporary Mexican restaurant wows with creative plates that often feature homemade masa and flavor-packed salsas. The camote asado (roasted sweet potato) is an excellent way to start off your meal. Reservations accepted. *2556 15th St., 303-455-9463. Dinner*

ANNETTE $$$
Aurora / American James Beard Award–winning chef Caroline Glover's Annette delivers a lineup of seasonal salads, pastas, wood-fired proteins, and other comforting bites in a modern, inviting space. Reservations accepted. *2501 Dallas St., Suite 108, Aurora, 720-710-9975. Dinner*

ASH'KARA $$$
LoHi / Middle Eastern Chef Daniel Asher offers a playful take on Middle Eastern cuisine at this plant-bedecked eatery. Reservations accepted. *2005 W. 33rd Ave., 303-537-4407. Dinner, Brunch*

AVANTI FOOD & BEVERAGE $$
LoHi / International Current tenants of this food collective include Gorlami Pizza, Bowls by Ko, Quiero Arepas, Knockabout Burgers, and Pho King Rapidos. *3200 Pecos St., 720-269-4778. Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner*

★**BAEKGA** $$$
Lowry Field / Korean Chef-owner Sean Baek serves flavorful Korean eats at this quaint Lowry Town Center spot. Don't miss out on the lunch specials: hearty portions of protein and rice that come with plenty of banchan (side dishes). Reservations not accepted. *100 Quebec St., Suite 115, 720-639-3872. Lunch, Dinner*

BÁNH & BUTTER BAKERY CAFE $
Aurora / French Thoa Nguyen crafts French pastries inspired by her Vietnamese heritage at this East Colfax cafe. Go for the dazzling crêpe cakes, each made with 25 to 30 layers. Reservations not accepted. *9935 E. Colfax Ave., Aurora, 720-513-9313. Breakfast, Lunch*

BECKON $$$$
RiNo / Contemporary Chef Duncan Holmes brings an elevated, intimate dining experience to Larimer Street. The seasonal menu changes frequently, and excellent, thoughtful wine pairings are available. Reservations accepted. *2843 Larimer St., 303-749-0020. Dinner*

BLACKBELLY $$$
Boulder / American Chef Hosea Rosenberg's carnivore-friendly menu focuses on charcuterie, small plates, and daily butcher specials. Try the koji-cured heritage pork chop. Also check out the adjacent butcher shop and market, which serves breakfast and lunch. Reservations accepted. *1606 Conestoga St., Boulder, 303-247-1000. Dinner*

BRASSERIE BRIXTON $$$$
Cole / French Pair the likes of steak frites, pâté with house-baked sourdough, and other comforting French specialties with a glass of wine at this neighborhood bistro. Reservations accepted. *3701 N. Williams St., 720-617-7911. Dinner*

★**CARNE** $$$$
RiNo / Steak House The newest restaurant from chef Dana Rodriguez, this "steak home" grills exquisite cuts of beef at a range of price points. Also explore its internationally inspired menu of shared plates and composed entrées. Reservations accepted. *2601 Larimer St., 303-953-1558. Dinner*

CARRERA'S TACOS $
Greenwood Village / Mexican Brothers Josh and Ryan Carrera sling West Coast–style tacos at this food truck turned brick-and-mortar. Try the Cali burrito, stuffed with french fries and your choice of protein. Reservations not accepted. *7939 E. Arapahoe Road, Greenwood Village, 720-689-8035. Lunch, Dinner*

CHOLON $$$
LoDo / Asian This upscale restaurant serves modern twists on Pan-Asian cuisine. Don't miss the French onion soup dumplings. Also try the location near Sloan's Lake. Reservations accepted. *1555 Blake St., 303-353-5223. Lunch, Dinner*

DAUGHTER THAI KITCHEN & BAR $$$
LoHi / Thai This date-night-ready Thai restaurant from Ounjit Hardacre serves beautifully plated dishes and inventive cocktails with an elegant ambience to match. Reservations accepted. *1700 Platte St., Suite 140, 720-667-4652. Lunch, Dinner*

★**DÂN DÃ** $$
Aurora / Vietnamese Time-tested family recipes delight at An and Thao Nguyen's Vietnamese eatery. Don't miss the spring roll towers and bubbling clay pots. Reservations accepted. *9945 E. Colfax Ave., Aurora, 720-476-7183. Lunch, Dinner*

DENVER MILK MARKET $$
LoDo / International Sage Hospitality's 11-venue collection of bars and restaurants features everything from fresh pasta to poke bowls to lobster rolls. *1800 Wazee St., 303-792-8242. Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner, Brunch*

★**DOUGH COUNTER** $$
University Hills / Pizza This fast-casual pizzeria specializes in Sicilian- and New York–style pies. For the former, we especially like the Triple Threat, which is striped with marinara, pesto, and vodka sauces. The house-made chicken tenders are also delightful. Reservations not accepted. *2466 S. Colorado Blvd., 303-997-8977. Lunch, Dinner*

DRAGONFLY NOODLE $$
LoDo / Asian This eatery from Edwin Zoe serves a variety of bao and noodle dishes. Order the ramen with house-made noodles. Also try the Boulder location. Reservations not accepted. *1350 16th Street Mall, 720-543-8000. Lunch, Dinner*

EDGEWATER PUBLIC MARKET $$
Edgewater / International Satisfy your cravings for everything from wild game sandwiches to Ethiopian fare at this collective of nearly two dozen food stalls and boutiques. *5505 W. 20th Ave., Edgewater, 720-749-2239. Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner*

EFRAIN'S OF BOULDER $
Boulder / Mexican This classic institution in Boulder is known for its massive bowls of pork green chile. Reservations not accepted. *2480 Canyon Blvd., Boulder, 303-440-4045. Lunch, Dinner*

EL FIVE $$$
LoHi / Mediterranean Justin Cucci's fifth Edible Beats concept boasts panoramic views, a menu of creative tapas, and Spanish-style gin and tonics. Reservations accepted. *2930 Umatilla St., 303-524-9193. Dinner*

EL TACO DE MEXICO $
Lincoln Park / Mexican This Denver favorite, which won an America's Classics Award from the James Beard Foundation in 2020, serves Mexican food with an emphasis on authenticity. Reservations not accepted. *714 Santa Fe Drive, 303-623-3926. Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner*

ELWAY'S $$$$
Downtown / Steak House This sleek restaurant named after the Broncos great serves classic steak house fare in upscale environs. Reservations accepted. *1881 Curtis St., 303-312-3107. Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner, Brunch*

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FARMHOUSE THAI EATERY $$
Lakewood / Thai This cozy spot offers flavorful specialties from multiple regions, including papaya pok pok and khao kha moo. Reservations not accepted. *98 Wadsworth Blvd., Suite 117, Lakewood, 303-237-2475. Lunch, Dinner*

FLAGSTAFF HOUSE $$$$
Boulder / Contemporary Located on the side of Flagstaff Mountain, this eatery has a huge wine list and a spectacular view of Boulder. Try the foie gras. Reservations accepted. *1138 Flagstaff Road, Boulder, 303-442-4640. Dinner*

FRANK & ROZE $
Hale / Cafe This stylish cafe serves sustainably sourced coffee from South America, Africa, Asia, and beyond. Try the breakfast sandwiches. Reservations not accepted. *4097 E. Ninth Ave., 720-328-2960. Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner*

★**FRASCA FOOD AND WINE** $$$$
Boulder / Italian The elegant fare at Frasca, an ode to the cuisine of Friuli–Venezia Giulia in Italy from master sommelier Bobby Stuckey and chef Lachlan Mackinnon-Patterson, always wows. Splurge on executive chef Ian Palazzola's nine-course Friulano menu. Reservations accepted. *1738 Pearl St., Boulder, 303-442-6966. Dinner*

G-QUE BBQ $$
Westminster / Barbecue This fast-casual joint serves award-winning hickory-smoked pork, brisket, ribs, and more. Multiple locations. Reservations not accepted. *5160 W. 120th Ave., Suite K, Westminster, 303-379-9205. Lunch, Dinner*

THE GREENWICH $$$
RiNo / Pizza Restaurateur Delores Tronco brings a slice of her favorite New York City neighborhood to RiNo. Reservations accepted. *3258 Larimer St., 720-868-5006. Dinner*

GUARD AND GRACE $$$$
Downtown / Steak House Chef Troy Guard's modern steak house offers a chic setting for its elevated fare. Reservations accepted. *1801 California St., 303-293-8500. Lunch, Dinner*

HEY KIDDO $$$$
Berkeley / Contemporary From the team behind the Wolf's Tailor and Brutø, this eclectic, globally inspired restaurant presents fine dining fare in relaxed environs. Reservations accepted. *4337 Tennyson St., Suite 300, 720-778-2977. Dinner*

★**HOP ALLEY** $$$$
RiNo / Chinese From Tommy Lee of Uncle, this neighborhood hangout's daily menu is composed of dishes rooted in Chinese tradition with a distinctive flair. Don't miss the exclusive chef's counter experience. Reservations accepted. *3500 Larimer St., 720-379-8340. Dinner*

ISTANBUL CAFE & BAKERY $
Washington Virginia Vale / Middle Eastern Friendly owner Ismet Yilmaz prepares authentic Turkish pastries. Multiple locations. Reservations not accepted. *850 S. Monaco Parkway, Suite 9, 720-787-7751. Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner*

IZAKAYA DEN $$$
Platt Park / Japanese Ultra-fresh sushi, sashimi, and creative small plates are on the menu at this local favorite. Reservations accepted. *1487-A S. Pearl St., 303-777-0691. Lunch, Dinner*

JAX FISH HOUSE & OYSTER BAR $$$
LoDo / Seafood Enjoy sustainable seafood in an upbeat atmosphere. Specialties include the raw oyster bar and seasonally composed plates. Multiple locations. Reservations accepted. *1539 17th St., 303-292-5767. Dinner*

★**KIKÉ'S RED TACOS** $
LoHi / Mexican This brick-and-mortar location of the popular Mexican food truck is known for its queso tacos, which come stuffed with cheese and your choice of meat. Doctor up your order with the rainbow of sauces at the salsa bar. Reservations not accepted. *1200 W. 38th Ave., 720-397-0591. Lunch, Dinner*

KUMOYA JAPANESE KITCHEN $$$
Highland / Asian Seasoned chef Corey Baker serves rare-in-Denver nigiri and dry-aged fish in a romantic setting. Don't miss the sandoitchi: a milk bread sandwich with chicken thigh katsu and Japanese curry egg salad. Reservations accepted. *2400 W. 32nd Ave., 303-862-6664. Dinner*

★**LA FORÊT** $$$$
Speer / French Transport yourself to the forest at this cocktail-centric French restaurant decorated with floor-to-ceiling aspen trunks. Head in during pastis hour to sample the anise-flavored apéritif with small plates, or dine on dishes like stag au poivre or rabbit vadouvan. Reservations not accepted. *38 S. Broadway, 303-351-7938. Dinner*

LEEZAKAYA $$$$
Aurora / Japanese From the team behind Tofu Story and Mono Mono Korean Fried Chicken, this swanky eatery boasts a large menu of Japanese bites and sake. The mentaiko creamy pasta is a must-order. Reservations accepted. *2710 S. Havana St., Aurora, 720-769-6595. Lunch, Dinner*

LOU'S ITALIAN SPECIALTIES $$
Curtis Park / Italian This takeout-only spot by Josh Pollack of Rosenberg's Bagels & Delicatessen takes after classic Tri State Italian delis. Try the Louie, a classic sub packed with salami, capicola, and ham. Reservations not accepted. *3357 N. Downing St., 720-287-3642. Lunch, Dinner*

★**LUCINA EATERY & BAR** $$$
South Park Hill / Latin American Bold flavors from Latin America, the Caribbean, and coastal Spain tantalize at this lively restaurant. Try the mofongo (plantain mash) or the two-person paella with rotating toppings, only served on Fridays and Saturdays. Reservations accepted. *2245 Kearney St., Suite 101, 720-814-1053. Dinner*

MACHETE TEQUILA & TACOS $
Cherry Creek / Mexican Enjoy tequilas and tacos al pastor at this Cherry Creek eatery. Also try the Union Station location. Reservations accepted. *2817 E. Third Ave., 303-333-1567. Lunch, Dinner*

★**MAJOR TOM** $$$$
RiNo / American This lounge from the team behind Beckon offers a Champagne-centric drink menu and a lineup of shareable bites. Enjoy larger-format plates at a table inside, or throw back some oysters on the beautiful patio. Reservations accepted. *2845 Larimer St., 303-848-9777. Dinner*

★**MAKFAM** $$
Baker / Chinese The Chinese food at this street-food-inspired, fast-casual eatery in the Baker neighborhood eschews tradition for a whole lot more fun. Try the jian bing (scallion pancake) sandwiches. Reservations not accepted. *39 W. First Ave. Lunch, Dinner*

★**MARIGOLD** $$$$
Lyons / European This small, light-filled restaurant serves seasonally driven, French- and Italian-influenced fare. The pink-peppercorn-laced farinata (chickpea pancake) is a delicious mainstay of the frequently changing menu, and the amaro-focused cocktail program is also delightful. Reservations accepted. *405 Main St., Suite B, Lyons, 303-823-2333. Dinner*

MIZU IZAKAYA $$
LoHi / Sushi This contemporary Japanese restaurant offers an impressive bar and a hip atmosphere. Order items from the binchotan (charcoal grill) or the raw bar, or give appetizers like the cream pork kimchi a try. Reservations accepted. *1560 Boulder St., 720-372-7100. Lunch, Dinner*

★**MOLOTOV KITSCHEN & COCKTAILS** $$$$
City Park / Eastern European The ever-changing menu at this kitschy restaurant in City Park from chef Bo Porytko (formerly of Misfit Snack Bar) celebrates the cuisine of Ukraine. Try creative takes on borscht and Eastern European dumplings. Reservations accepted. *3333 E. Colfax Ave., 303-316-3333. Dinner*

MY BROTHER'S BAR $
LoHi / Pub Enjoy beers and burgers with classical music in one of Denver's oldest bars. Order the JCB burger with jalapeño cream cheese. Reservations not accepted. *2376 15th St., 303-455-9991. Lunch, Dinner*

NI TUYO $$$
Belcaro / Mexican Visit this Bonnie Brae eatery for bubbly molcajetes: piping-hot stone bowls of Mexican meats and veggies stewed in chile sauce. Or grab a seat at the bar for a tasty margarita with an order of chips and salsa. Reservations not accepted. *730 S. University Blvd., 303-282-8896. Dinner*

NOBLE RIOT $$$
RiNo / American Find charcuterie boards, fried chicken, and other bites at this sommelier-operated natural wine bar. Reservations accepted. *1336 27th St., 303-993-5330. Dinner*

★**NOISETTE RESTAURANT & BAKERY** $$$$
LoHi / French Chefs Tim and Lillian Lu serve elegant renditions of bourgeoisie-style specialties (French home-cooked comforts) in a romantic, light-drenched space. Tear into the perfectly crisp baguette to set the Parisian scene for your dining experience. Reservations accepted. *3254 Navajo St., Suite 100, 720-769-8103. Dinner, Brunch*

NOLA VOODOO TAVERN AND PERKS $$
Clayton / Southern New Orleans native and owner Henry Batiste serves his grandmother's recipes for gumbo, po' boys, and much more at this Louisiana-inspired spot. Reservations accepted. *3321 Bruce Randolph Ave., 720-389-9544. Lunch, Dinner*

OCEAN PRIME $$$$
LoDo / Seafood A marriage between land and sea, this supper club offers steak house dining and fresh fish in one. Reservations accepted. *1465 Larimer St., 303-825-3663. Dinner*

★**ODIE B'S** $
Sunnyside / American Sandwiches reach their prime at this fast-casual restaurant. Try twists on classics like the fried chicken sandwich with deviled egg spread and the mixed bag of fries, which combines four different shapes of fried spuds. Reservations not accepted. *2651 W. 38th Ave., 303-993-8078. Breakfast, Lunch, Brunch*

OSAKA RAMEN $$
RiNo / Japanese Jeff Osaka's modern ramen shop features original noodle soups, bento boxes, and creative small plates. Reservations not accepted. *2611 Walnut St., 303-955-7938. Lunch, Dinner*

★**OTOTO** $$$
Platt Park / Japanese From the team behind Sushi Den, this eatery breaks away from its Den Corner counterparts by focusing on more casual Japanese eats. Try the yellowtail collar grilled over white oak charcoal. Reservations accepted. *1501 S. Pearl St., 303-942-1416. Dinner, Brunch*

★**POINT EASY** $$$$
Whittier / Contemporary This stylish, inviting farm-to-table eatery produces feasts made with thoughtfully sourced ingredients, many of which are grown locally. Pair the calamari- and tomato-studded bucatini nero with a specialty cocktail. Reservations accepted. *2000 E. 28th Ave., 303-233-5656. Dinner*

POTAGER $$$
Capitol Hill / Contemporary Since 1997, this rustic Capitol Hill restaurant has specialized in fresh, seasonally driven food. The menu changes once a month. Reservations accepted. *1109 N. Ogden St., 303-246-7073. Dinner*

QUIERO AREPAS $
Platt Park / Latin American The entirely gluten-free menu at this Platt Park eatery offers delicious selections like the pollo guisado arepa, a flatbread that comes stuffed with shredded chicken, black beans, and cheese. Also check out the LoHi location. Reservations not accepted. *1859 S. Pearl St., 720-432-4205. Lunch, Dinner*

RAS KASSA'S $$$
Lafayette / Ethiopian Find shareable Ethiopian cuisine in a comfortable environment. Order a meat or vegetarian combo plate and a glass of honey wine. Reservations not accepted. *802 S. Public Road, Lafayette, 303-447-2919. Dinner*

REDEEMER PIZZA $$$
RiNo / Pizza Spencer White and Alex Figura, the duo behind Dio Mio, bring perfectly blistered, New York City–style sourdough pizza to RiNo. Reservations accepted. *2705 Larimer St., 720-780-1379. Dinner*

★**RESTAURANT OLIVIA** $$$$
Washington Park / Italian This cozy yet modern neighborhood spot specializes in fresh pastas of all varieties. The ravioli and other stuffed pastas are must-orders, and a specialty Negroni doesn't hurt, either. Reservations accepted. *290 S. Downing St., 303-999-0395. Dinner*

RIOJA $$$$
LoDo / Mediterranean Chef Jennifer Jasinski creates Mediterranean-influenced cuisine. Also try her lunchtime takeout pop-up, Flavor Dojo, which offers healthy bowls. Reservations accepted. *1431 Larimer St., 303-820-2282. Lunch, Dinner, Brunch*

SAFTA $$$$
RiNo / Mediterranean At Safta, chef Alon Shaya and his team serve modern Israeli fare. Crave-worthy specialties include hummus, labneh, and other dips accompanied by wood-oven pita. Also check out the weekend brunch buffet. Reservations accepted. *3330 Brighton Blvd., Suite 201, 720-408-2444. Brunch, Dinner*

★**SAP SUA** $$$
Congress Park / Vietnamese This smart eatery from husband-and-wife duo Ni and Anna Nguyen in Congress Park finds its culinary footing in Vietnamese flavors. Herbaceous offerings like culantro-capped tomato toast and lemongrass-scented pork shoulder are favorites of those who frequent the vibrantly decorated restaurant. Reservations accepted. *2550 E. Colfax Ave., 303-736-2303. Dinner*

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SEÑOR BEAR $$$$
LoHi / Latin American This charming LoHi spot draws from the vibrant cuisines of Latin America and has excellent tropical cocktails. Reservations accepted. *3301 Tejon St., 720-572-5997. Dinner, Brunch*

★**SPUNTINO** $$$$
Highland / Italian Enjoy the eclectic and locally sourced menu at this Italian-inspired, husband-and-wife-owned spot. Go for any of the dishes with Southern Indian influences—a product of chef Cindhura Reddy's heritage—like malai kofta gnocchi. Don't miss the house-made gelatos for dessert. Reservations accepted. *2639 W. 32nd Ave., 303-433-0949. Dinner*

STONE CELLAR BISTRO $$$
Arvada / Contemporary Visit this farm-to-table spot for beautifully presented dishes made with local produce by chefs Jordan Alley and Brandon Kerr. Don't miss the foie gras parfait or the hot honey fried chicken. Reservations accepted. *7605 Grandview Ave., Arvada, 720-630-7908. Dinner*

★**SUNDAY VINYL** $$$
LoDo / European This Union Station restaurant offers warm hospitality, exquisite cuisine, and an extensive wine list—all to the soundtrack of a vinyl-only playlist. Order the high-meets-low caviar-topped hash brown patty and something from the indulgent selection of sweet treats. Reservations accepted. *1803 16th Street Mall, 720-738-1803. Dinner*

SUSHI SASA $$$
LoHi / Japanese Enjoy Japanese fusion cuisine—including sushi combos, poke bowls, noodles, and much more—in a sleek, modern setting. Don't miss the seared wagyu beef with cucumbers, foie gras, and sesame tamari. Reservations accepted. *2401 15th St., Suite 80, 303-433-7272. Lunch, Dinner*

TAMAYO $$$
LoDo / Mexican This spot's modern menu is derived from the flavors and ingredients of chef-owner Richard Sandoval's native Mexico. Check out the rooftop lounge and the selection of more than 100 tequilas. Reservations accepted. *1400 Larimer St., 720-946-1433. Lunch, Dinner, Brunch*

TAVERNETTA $$$$
LoDo / Italian The team behind Boulder's acclaimed Frasca Food and Wine offers the same attention to hospitality at this more casual Denver restaurant. The charming space is home to dishes from across Italy and a deep wine list. Reservations accepted. *1889 16th St., 720-605-1889. Lunch, Dinner*

TEALEE'S TEAHOUSE AND BOOKSTORE $$
Five Points / International Head to this charming teahouse-bookstore-market for loose-leaf and specialty teas and all-day fare like soups, salads, sandwiches, and freshly baked pastries. Reservations accepted. *611 22nd St., 303-593-2013. Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner*

TEMAKI DEN $$
RiNo / Japanese Chef Kenta Kamo and Sushi Den's Toshi Kizaki team up to bring delectable temaki (hand rolls), aburi (flame-seared) nigiri, and craft beverages to this restaurant inside the Source Hotel. Reservations accepted. *3330 Brighton Blvd., Suite 110, 225-405-0811. Dinner*

TOCABE, AN AMERICAN INDIAN EATERY $
Berkeley / American Feast on Indigenous fare such as fry bread tacos made with ingredients sourced from Native producers at this fast-casual spot. Reservations not accepted. *3536 W. 44th Ave., 720-524-8282. Lunch, Dinner*

★**TRAVELING MERCIES** $$$
Aurora / Seafood Annette's Caroline Glover expands her offerings in Aurora's Stanley Marketplace with this petite yet airy oyster and cocktail bar. Order the anchovy and baguette with French churned butter. Reservations accepted. *2501 Dallas St., Suite 311, Aurora. Dinner*

TUPELO HONEY SOUTHERN KITCHEN & BAR $$$
LoDo / Southern Nosh on reimagined versions of down-home dishes, such as honey-dusted fried chicken. Reservations accepted. *1650 Wewatta St., 720-274-0650. Lunch, Dinner, Brunch*

URBAN VILLAGE GRILL $$$
Lone Tree / Indian This eatery serves classic and contemporary dishes from across India. Reservations accepted. *8505 Park Meadows Center Drive, Suite 2184A, Lone Tree, 720-536-8565. Lunch, Dinner*

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US THAI CAFE $

Edgewater / Thai Fresh ingredients, spicy dishes, and a chef straight from Thailand make for an authentic, if mouth-tingling, dining experience. Reservations accepted. *5228 W. 25th Ave., Edgewater, 303-233-3345. Lunch, Dinner*

VINH XUONG BAKERY $$

Athmar Park / Vietnamese This family-owned bakery has roots in Denver that stretch back more than 25 years. They serve up delicious banh mi sandwiches and other tasty Vietnamese treats. Reservations not accepted. *2370 Alameda Ave., 303-922-0999. Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner*

WATERCOURSE FOODS $$

Uptown / American This vegetarian icon has been serving wholesome food since 1998. The zesty soups, salads, and wraps are healthy and delicious. Reservations accepted. *837 E. 17th Ave., 303-832-7313. Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner, Brunch*

WEATHERVANE CAFE $

City Park West / American Enjoy a small but sumptuous menu of breakfast items, sandwiches, and salads at this cozy Uptown cafe. Reservations not accepted. *1725 E. 17th Ave. Breakfast, Lunch*

WELLNESS SUSHI $$

Congress Park / Japanese Vegan sushi stars at this fast-casual joint by husband-and-wife duo Steven and Phoebe Lee. Don't miss hot options like the soupless ramen. Reservations not accepted. *2504 E. Colfax Ave., 720-306-4989. Lunch, Dinner*

WHITTIER CAFE $

Whittier / Cafe This espresso bar serves coffee, beer, and wine sourced from various African nations and a small menu of pastries, breakfast burritos, panini, and more. Reservations not accepted. *1710 E. 25th Ave., 720-550-7440. Breakfast, Lunch*

★ **THE WOLF'S TAILOR** $$$$

Sunnyside / Contemporary This Michelin-starred restaurant from chef-restaurateur Kelly Whitaker transforms local ingredients into a globally minded, prix fixe tasting menu. Don't get too full before pastry chef Emily Thompson's dessert course. Reservations accepted. *4058 Tejon St., 720-456-6705. Dinner*

WYNKOOP BREWING COMPANY $$

LoDo / Pub Enjoy fresh beer and pub favorites such as the bison burger at one of Denver's original brewpubs. Reservations accepted. *1634 18th St., 303-297-2700. Lunch, Dinner, Brunch*

● **XIQUITA** $$$

Uptown / Mexican Chef Erasmo Casiano serves soulful fare inspired by the cuisines of Mexico City. Don't miss the masa dishes. Reservations accepted. *500 E. 19th Ave., 720-287-2701. Dinner*

YACHT CLUB $

Cole / American Enjoy classic and creative cocktails alongside an array of snacks at this loungelike bar. Reservations not accepted. *3701 N. Williams St., 720-443-1135. Dinner*

YAHYA'S MEDITERRANEAN GRILL & PASTRIES $$

City Park West / Mediterranean This family-run restaurant serves silky hummus, grilled kebabs, and from-scratch sweets. Reservations accepted. *2207 E. Colfax Ave., 720-532-8746. Lunch, Dinner*

★ **YUAN WONTON** $$

North Park Hill / Asian House-made dumplings earn top billing at this ambitious eatery from chef Penelope Wong. Head in on Fridays for a dim-sum-themed lunch that showcases the best of Wong's hand-folded delicacies. Reservations accepted. *2878 Fairfax St., 303-320-5642. Lunch*

ZEPPELIN STATION $$

RiNo / International This industrial-chic food hall in RiNo is home to seven globally inspired food and drink vendors, including Procession Coffee, Purisma, and Gyros King. *3501 Wazee St. Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner, Brunch*

ZOE MA MA $

LoDo / Chinese This cozy counter-service spot offers Chinese home-style cooking. Also try the Boulder location. Reservations not accepted. *1625 Wynkoop St., 303-545-6262. Lunch, Dinner*

▶ These listings are in no way related to advertising in *5280*. If you find that a restaurant differs significantly from the information in its listing or your favorite restaurant is missing from the Dining Guide, please let us know. Write us at 5280 Elevated, Inc., 1675 Larimer St., Suite 675, Denver, CO 80202 or dining@5280.com.

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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 61

from a Russian team, but Metcalfe's safe return didn't quell the doubt that had begun to boil. "I pushed way past where I should have," she recalls. "I took a while to think: *Do I even belong on these peaks?*"

The next year marked a turning point. She'd summited four of the eight-thousanders, but her knees ached from decades of skiing and climbing; an orthopedist told her she had the joints of an 80-year-old. Not only was she exhausted from working at a hospital during the pandemic, but she'd also become dependent on opioids following her 2014 hip replacement, a situation that threatened her medical career. In early 2022, she left her job, having already agreed to cease practicing until an independent group of doctors could assess the severity of her case and suggest a course of action. She took weekly drug tests to document her sobriety and attended 12-step meetings.

She felt like her identity was in doubt. "Not being able to practice medicine, I think I had lost a lot of self-esteem and felt shame to my family and friends," Metcalfe says. "I was in a dark place, had made mistakes, and was searching for something to hold onto that would give me purpose. This is what climbing provided." So, she went all in: She dipped into her 401(k) and committed to finishing her final 10 eight-thousanders by 2024, when she would be 50.

Metcalfe returned to Nepal in March 2022, summiting Dhaulagiri then moving on to Kangchenjunga, the world's third-tallest peak. There, Metcalfe suffered frostbite on four of her toes, and she and her team almost ran out of oxygen. Forced to turn back, she began to hallucinate during the descent, seeing figures she believed were Indian pilgrims transported to the mountain by bus. She turned to her climbing partner, Chris Warner, a former Everest guide based in Aspen who became the second American man to summit all 14 eight-thousanders. "Did you see those tourists over there?" she asked him. Convinced her expedition was over due to the frostbite, Metcalfe took a helicopter to Kathmandu. A week later, at the prodding of Mingma G, Metcalfe returned to Kangchenjunga and hobbled to the summit.

Of the eight peaks remaining, five were in Pakistan, which her parents pleaded with her to avoid, fearing the country's past violence. In 2013, terrorists massacred 11 people in the base camp of Nanga Parbat, the world's ninth-tallest mountain. "Whatever you do, you're never going to climb in Pakistan, are you?" her father asked. She assured them she was only trying to climb the eight-thousanders in Nepal, concealing her dream.

"Finally, I was like, 'All right, Tracee, just tell them what you're doing,'" she remembers, "'because it's going to kill you if you don't.'" She confessed her intentions and, in June 2023, flew to Islamabad. On 26,660-foot Nanga Parbat, a fang of rock and ice known as "the killer mountain," Metcalfe fought through a crippling gastrointestinal illness high on the peak and summited. She stepped over a pair of frozen bodies on K2 later that month; after topping out, a gust of wind ripped one of Metcalfe's contact lenses from her eye, with thousands of feet still to descend. That fall, she summited 26,781-foot Manaslu, her ninth eight-thousander, in Nepal. She then

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proceeded to Tibet, where she joined dozens of others, including Gutu and Rzucidlo, for the attempt on Shishapangma.

METCALFE RUMINATED on the 2023 tragedy for months: what caused it, what could have been done differently, and what it meant for her quest moving forward. "Maybe that's just me compartmentalizing it so that I could justify climbing again," she says. "But in my mind, I was like, *I think we can come back to this mountain and make better decisions.*" After summiting three peaks in 2023 and suddenly becoming the closest American woman to finishing, she committed to attempting her last five in 2024, culminating with a return to Shishapangma in October.

Ellen Miller says she observed a change in Metcalfe's motivation. Metcalfe insists she simply wanted to resume the rest of her life—powder skiing with friends, not having to train all the time. "I would say 10 to 20 percent was about being first," Metcalfe says. "Mostly, it was about being done. I thought it would be cool to contain it to a decade and see if I could do five in a year at age 50."

Metcalfe had never been sponsored nor made much of an attempt to document her climbs. But before returning to Asia, she pitched herself to backers for the first time. She built a website touting her 8,000-meter summits and made her private Instagram account public. Aside from an $8,000 contribution by her hip surgeon, however, no one bit. "I'm just going to be really honest with you," one vice president of marketing told her. "You need to have a minimum of 10,000 followers, and you're too old."

At the same time, a new woman had emerged as a contender for the American record, and she was everything Metcalfe was not. Nikol Kovalchuk, a fitness model and the wife of NHL star Ilya Kovalchuk, was an influencer with 208,000 Instagram followers. Metcalfe had around 1,000. Eight days after Metcalfe topped out on Lhotse in May 2024, Kovalchuk did the same, taking the edge, 11 peaks to 10. (Kovalchuk did not respond to *5280*'s requests for comment.)

Metcalfe had seen the tug of the record and its heartbreaking fallout, and she refused to repeat the cycle. When people asked what she would do if it came down to Shishapangma again, with her and Kovalchuk tied at 13, she replied: "I'm just gonna walk up to her and say, 'We need to do this together. We need to show the world, first of all, this doesn't matter. And we're gonna do the opposite.'"

Metcalfe summited Gasherbrum 2 on July 22, then Gasherbrum 1, both in Pakistan, 11 days later. When she returned to base camp, her gear was wet, and her legs felt wobbly. To remain on schedule, however, she had to wake up at 6 a.m. and march 10 hours to the base of Broad Peak. "I knew if I didn't do Broad, I wouldn't be the first," Metcalfe says. "But I really, genuinely was like, *You know what? It's OK. If it's meant to be, it's meant to be. I just have to trust the universe.*"

Metcalfe and two Sherpas topped out on Broad on August 8—her third eight-thousander in 17 days. When she walked into base camp afterward, "her body was shaking," Mingma G recalls. "Almost no control on her feet. She looked very weak."

Back at Shishapangma a month and a half later, however, Metcalfe felt restored. Kovalchuk was there, too, but Metcalfe had reclaimed the lead, 13 to 12. As long as she summited, the record would be hers. She worried about climbing past where the quartet had died, but she knew the technical challenge was manageable. "It felt like the

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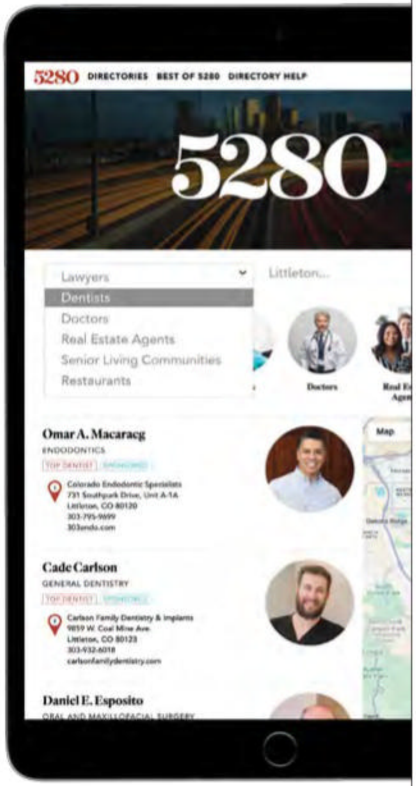

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hard ones were done," she says. Rzucidlo's sister, Angela Terry, sent a note of encouragement that Metcalfe read while traveling to the mountain. "Although we have never met, my family and I wanted to send our best wishes to you! If you are in Tibet and going for Shishapangma stay safe! We are rooting for you!"

On the afternoon of October 4, Metcalfe and a cadre of climbers from six countries—a half-dozen of whom were finishing their 14-peak projects—navigated an airy ridge to the front-porch-size summit, careful to avoid the corniced rim.

"Tracee! Congratulations," said Mingma G as Metcalfe took her last few steps.

"Congratulations," she replied, removing her oxygen mask. "Now what? How do we get down?"

He laughed. She wheezed. Their track glinted in the background. "Tracee's scared," Metcalfe said. Another step. "Tracee's drained."

Sirbaz Khan, who had just become the first Pakistani to climb all 14 eight-thousanders, grabbed her arm and shook her. "Come on! Be happy, Tracee!" he said. She grinned nervously. "You're right," she replied.

The next day, she received a text in base camp that read, in part, "I am so happy that you claimed first American woman. I'm sure Gina was cheering you on. She spoke highly of you." It was from Rzucidlo's mom.

Suddenly, the weight of her achievement hit like a block of ice. Metcalfe began to weep.

TWO AND A HALF WEEKS after her summit, I pull into Metcalfe's driveway in West Vail, where she lives in a townhome. Other than a couple of mentions on climbing blogs, her achievement had attracted little attention—not even a story in her hometown paper, the *Vail Daily*—though she did gain 20 Instagram followers. Metcalfe makes it clear during our drive to the Pitkin Creek trailhead, where we will hike into the snowy Gore Range, that the lack of attention doesn't bother her, even if she finds it curious. The criticism she's received? That's a different story.

On the same day Metcalfe summited Shishapangma, well-known mountaineering blogger Alan Arnette, who is also based in Colorado, published a Himalayan recap. "The 2024 autumn climbing season," he wrote, "reveals just how routine making the summit of an 8000-meter peak has become in the 2020s." Some took it as a swipe at Metcalfe's record. Cathy Cohn, Metcalfe's best friend of 30 years, questioned Arnette on Facebook. He defended his stance in a reply: "While noteworthy for the individual, it's no longer newsworthy in my view and is now similar to summiting peaks like Denali or [Argentina's] Aconcagua"—mountains that stand 1,810 and 1,040 meters lower than 8,000 meters, respectively.

Metcalfe has heard similar opinions levied behind her back for years. "I get that I'm not a badass alpinist, and I've never pretended to be," she says. "So why do you have to shit on me?" Metcalfe, who spent $350,000 on her expeditions, doesn't dispute that her style is less impressive than Kaltenbrunner's and Pasaban's. But equaling their feats was never the point. "I am really proud of myself for doing this," she says.

"People can criticize her all they want for her, whatever, style," Miller says. "But putting one foot in front of the other up there is no joke. And frostbite is no joke. Altitude, snow blindness, digestive issues above 25,000 feet—the general public just has no idea how difficult it is."

Tragedies notwithstanding, one could find plenty of meaning in the fact that Metcalfe holds the title. Slow and steady won, at a time in mountaineering when it pays to sprint. "I think it's the way it's supposed to be," says Warner, her climbing partner, who knew both Rzucidlo and Gutu and laments how the race corrupted their approach. "There's an old saying: 'Don't reach the peak but miss the point.' The point is, *Why are you there?* You're there to become the best version of yourself. I think Tracee didn't miss the point at all."

Metcalfe and I sit on our packs in a clearing below Pitkin Lake, chomping on pineapple chunks in the sun. She says she hasn't used opioids for years but still attends local 12-step meetings and logs in to virtual sessions for health care workers who have struggled with substance abuse. "They give me a lot of strength," she says. She takes Naproxen to numb the pain in her knee, which will be replaced a few weeks after our walk. Her goal is to recover in time for the Leadville 100 mountain bike race next summer. Someday, she hopes to summit an eight-thousander without supplemental oxygen.

For now, she's trying to enjoy her accomplishment and assess what it means. "It felt like a validation that I do have worth, and I could follow through on things," she says. "I wasn't just someone defined by their mistakes."

We finish our snack and begin the 3,000-foot descent. Metcalfe takes the lead, limping down the slushy, rugged trail using a ski pole as a crutch due to her knee pain. She stops. "You go first," she says. "I'll actually be faster if I'm following." ▲

Breckenridge-based writer **Devon O'Neil** has covered Himalayan mountaineering since 2009. Send feedback to letters@5280.com.

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THE OVERSIMPLIFIED GUIDE TO:

Winter Cycling

Frigid temps and frosty conditions don't mean you have to let your two-wheeler hibernate until spring. Sarah Zoey Sturm, a professional off-road cyclist who lives in Durango and frequently trains during the mountain town's snowiest season, says the tricks to riding during winter are tweaking your gear and staying alert on the road. —CARI SHANE

1. No matter the bike—mountain, gravel, road, or hybrid—**upping traction** where the rubber meets the icy road will help you steer clear of slips and spills. Let out air from fully inflated tires until "they feel like a soft orange," Sturm says. The slight deflation provides a larger surface area for gripping the ground.

2. Spot a patch of ice ahead? Brake before your front tire comes into contact with the slippery surface. If you're already in the spill zone, "you can decelerate moderately—just **no sudden movements**" such as slamming on the brakes or turning too quickly, Sturm says.

3. While a blanket of fresh powder beckons skiers and snowboarders to play outside, road cyclists should keep their wheels locked up for the day. "It's gonna piss off drivers and put your life at risk," Sturm says. If you must hit the streets, **increase your visibility** by wearing bright colors and turning your bike lights on.

4. If a pair of insulated neoprene riding shoes, which can cost as much as $200, is outside your budget, keep your toes warm and the wind off your feet by sliding plastic liners **(fresh dog poop bags work surprisingly well)** over your socks before putting on your cleats.

5. **Dehydration is a threat** even in winter, so don't leave your emotional support water bottle at home. To prevent H_2O from freezing on the go, Sturm recommends filling your cup with warm water and adding a packet of electrolytes. The salt content of the mix and higher starting temp will stave off freezing.

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